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794 346 bership of two million and a local membership of about fifty. There is nothing prepossessing about the small white building. The wooden floor is sprinkled with sawdust and except for the piano the only furniture is several roughly built wooden benches. The walls of the mission are hung with placards bearing inscriptions, of which the following are a few: "Peace—the Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink, but joy, peace and good will," "Peace and Good Will to the World," "Peace, Father Divine is God, Salutation is Peace."

794 At about eight o'clock in the evening members begin straggling in, two or three at a time. They are dressed soberly, with a noticeable lack of bright colors and ornamentation of any description, as one of the precepts of the cult is the sacrifice of all worldly possessions. Upon joining the church they must surrender everything of material value to Father Divine. The old life is a thing of the past. The convert must accept new habits, new names, and an entirely new scheme of existence.

794 793 The ardor of followers is not dampened by the fact that their leader has never been known to visit the Savannah branch. They claim that he is always present spiritually and can in this manner accomplish his miracles. At the meeting a major part of the service is given over to a number of testimonials, presented by many of those present. One by one the converts intone their devotion to Father Divine * and vividly recount what he has done for them.

[796]

794 796 A stout Negro woman bearing the name of Sister Patience

curately portrays the House as it was found in this community. For this reason it was thought well to include it.

** Father Divine is said to have been born George Baker on a Hutchinson Island rice plantation near Savannah about sixty years ago. Sometime in the late 1890's it appears that he opened a meeting house in the Negro section of the Old Fort, calling himself "The Son of Righteousness." His activities in the community abruptly ceased when, after some trouble with the authorities, he fled from Savannah to escape a gang of whites who aimed to make him prove himself the reincarnation of Christ by walking on the Savannah River.*

Arriving in Baltimore, Maryland, he joined a religious sect headed by

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794 796 Peace * gives the following testimonial: "Once it wuz muh highes ambition tuh know duh tings uh duh worl. I loved cahds an drink an udduh vices. No day passed wen I wuz not so drunk dat I would gib out an hab tuh go tuh bed. Now it is not so. I hab nebuh seen duh Fathuh in duh body, but I know dat he is God, fuh I hab made spiritual contac wid him. Because uh rightous libin I am now weighin two hundud pouns. Praise Fathuh."

A thin, wiry little Negro man, ** whose eyes gleam with a fanatical light, speaks next. He gives his name as Noah's Ark and states that Father Divine has given him the power to raise his wife from the dead and has caused him to enter upon a new and sanctified life. Faithful Patience, the wife, is also present and in turn testifies as to the truth of his statement and as to her own faith in Father Divine.

Triumphant Virgin, † happy in the knowledge that she is now leading a blameless existence, steps forward and gives the following statement: "I know Fathuh Divine tuh be God cuz he lifted me out uh duh guttuh and changed me frum a drunkud an all udduh low tings dat I use tuh be.

[793] *Father Jehovia. Later, in New York City the new disciple decided to open his own cult. It was then that he adopted his present name and that his converts created the maxim "Father Divine is God."*

Converts both white and Negro were eager to join the new order. Today Father Divine computes his followers as being between 21,000,000 and 30,000,000, although outsiders give a more conservative estimate. The leader travels extensively and "heavens" have been established in various parts of the country. His weekly income is reputed to be $20,000 and is derived from the many business establishments operated under his supervision.

He has a fondness for flashy clothing, wears a five dollar gold piece for a stickpin, and rides about in a pale blue Rolls Royce and a scarlet monoplane.

The self-styled Messiah has now extended his activities to the field of politics, both national and international. There is a variance of public sentiment concerning him. To followers he appears to be "reincarnated God," while enemies insist he is a fraud, a hypnotist, and a remarkably clever actor who is at present growing a little tired of the role he has chosen to enact.

Robert Allerton Parker, "The Incredible Messiah" (Boston, 1937), pp. 80, 93, 94, 106, 183, 188, 209–36.

** Sister Patience Peace, Old Fort.*

*** Noah's Ark, Old Fort.*

† Triumphant Virgin, Old Fort.

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794 Muh ole name is dead an now tings reign tru Fathuh Divine.
796 Peace Thanks, Fathuh."

794 As the evening wears on, more of the devotees join in the
796 chanting and in the spirited singing of the hymns. Demon-
786 strations become more and more violent. Several of the con-
gregation, caught in the throes of a powerful religious in-
toxication, begin to dance and sway with abandonment.[19]
[533] Others in the group encourage the dancers with a rhythmic
clapping of hands and stamping of feet.

[533] On and on the dancers whirl while the piano pounds out
its accompaniment; above the din rises the wailed repetitious
version of an improvised hymn. The participants in the
dance seem oblivious to everything except the series of con-
tortions in which they are indulging. Eyes half closed, fixed
smiles on their faces, every muscle in their bodies aquiver,
they stumble blindly on. Some bump into the wooden
benches, others fall exhausted to the floor. Still the dance
goes on.[46]

[793] Over and over can be heard the hoarse chanting of the
worshipers as they continue to give praise to Father Divine,
the man who, according to their own account, was not born
in the ordinary manner but was "combusted" one day in
New York City and who was sent to earth to save his fol-
lowers from destruction.

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794 (292) congregation don their newest and most colorful garments. Preparation has been made for all emergencies. In attendance are burly guards whose duty it is to see that nothing occurs to disturb the smooth performance of the ceremonies. The floor has been thickly sprinkled with sawdust and the stout posts at the front of the church are padded to prevent injury to overzealous worshipers.

794 793 796 At the sudden sharp sound of a whistle all activity ceases; there is silence in the church. The Armor Bearers leave the building to escort the Bishop to his seat of honor. Soon they return, followed by the Queen who is arrayed in a pale green satin evening dress over which is worn a black velvet cape lined with scarlet. A double line of uniformed guards follows, and marching proudly between the lines is the Bishop. According to his own statement, the Holy Prophet, as his followers call him, is of Portuguese birth. His long dark hair which falls to his shoulders, his piercing eyes, his pointed beard, and sideburns all combine to give him a distinguished and unusual appearance.*

The procession continues to the front of the church, where, with much ceremony, the Bishop seats himself upon a lofty throne set far back on the spacious platform. The

* *Details of the early life of "Daddy Grace" are clothed in obscurity and little can be learned of the real origin of the House of Prayer. Some claim that he is of West Indian birth, others that he was born Marcilino Manuel Garcia in Portugal, and still others interpret his references to "a land beyond the sea" as indication that he hails from Egypt. All members of the cult must be baptized and during a four-week session in 1936 1,789 candidates were ministered to at a charge of $1.00 each. The Bishop advocates that members give generously of their material goods to the church and he has been known on occasions to go about among his congregation seizing purses and demanding that worshipers sacrifice treasured jewelry. It is a well known fact that his profession of "spiritual leader" has proved a vastly profitable one, and in the course of the last several years he has amassed a huge fortune. Many of "Daddy's" enterprises are looked upon with disfavor and suspicion by the police department. His frequent clashes with the law over various matters of an extremely worldly nature serves only to increase the attendance and the collections at the church and also give the Bishop much desired publicity. Followers are unimpressed by his occasional arrests, secure in the knowledge that no earthly force can ever conquer "Daddy."* See Time (*New York*), *March 7, 1938, XXXI, No. 10, p. 30.*

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794 Queen stands at the Bishop's right, facing the congregation.
793 The music blares forth with renewed intensity and the entire
multitude, led by the uniformed guard, passes in single file
• 796 before the throne. As members approach the Bishop, they
pledge themselves to him by removing their hats and bowing
low. In the midst of all this commotion "Daddy" sits, a remote, detached figure, his downcast eyes seemingly indicating that he is scarcely aware of this carefully planned reception.

794 Between the musical numbers several of the congregation
796 rise and loudly testify to the miracles that Bishop Grace [22]
[778] has performed in their behalf. A flourishing sale is con-
ducted in consecrated handkerchiefs and copies of a news-
[432] paper published by the cult. These are believed to possess
unusual healing powers.[8, 12] A ready market is also found
[755] for large pictures of the Bishop, for it is said that to chew
up his likeness will cure many kinds of illness.

The grand march is spectacular. All those present assemble in the large center aisle. The band strikes up a lively measure and the procession starts. At the front of the church the line of march divides, half the people going down one side aisle, the other half going down the opposite one. At first the procession is orderly and fairly quiet, but
[533] as time passes, the music becomes increasingly loud. Above the brass instruments the steady throb of the drum can be heard. Voices are raised in accompaniment, feet stamp, shoulders sway, and hands clap.[19]

796 Around and around the procession winds. The singing
and dancing become wilder and more abandoned. Many
786 now close their eyes, dancing blindly and stumbling into
those near them and into the benches and posts. By this time the music is almost deafening and the noise made by the worshipers is equally loud. The muscles of their bodies twitching convulsively, they continue in their dance.[46]

Occasionally one of the participants stops, and, regard-

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•796 less of the hindrance to the rest of the worshipers, jumps up
786 and down wildly, crying out in a shrill, hysterical voice. At length, exhausted, he sinks to the floor and is dragged by friends from under the whirling feet of the others.

One woman, seized by such a paroxysm, falls to her knees, screaming incoherently. Exhausted by her violent emotion, she lies on the rough board floor, her jaws hanging open loosely, her eyes closed. Slowly, she raises her hands and beats them together muttering, "Praise Daddy. Praise Daddy Grace."

[533] The pulsating rhythm of the instruments increases in tempo. A man leaps high into the air, gesticulating and babbling; faster and faster he whirls, until he too falls from utter exhaustion. Still the wild display continues. The terrific nervous strain is taking its toll, and now all but a few of the dancers stumble wearily. The steady, insistent sound of the drum urges them on; feet still shuffle, hands beat out the rhythm, and voices chant an incoherent incantation.

796 Abruptly the band ceases and members straggle back to their places. Those who have fallen out from exhaustion are dragged to the benches by their friends.

796 The service continues. During the evening many collec-
794 tions are taken up. Two of the deacons, acting on behalf of the Bishop, urge the people to contribute freely. Their methods of approach present a strong contrast. One, stout, dark-skinned, and clad in a pearl gray suit, has a gentle and persuasive manner. He says softly to the congregation, "Precious Haht, hep us tuh raise fawty bucks fuh Daddy Grace right quick. Wile duh Prophet sits on duh throne befo us, let us all contribute freely tuh him."

The other deacon, short and wiry, darts about among the congregation. His manner of speaking is quick, and he barks his orders to first one and then another of the church members. "Step right up now," he advises. "Dohn hole back on us. Anybody else now, come right up an contribute.

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•796 Ebrybody gib at leas one nickel now wile we still hab duh
794 privilege uh gibin tuh Daddy. Step up, ebrybody."

Until this point Bishop Grace, apparently indifferent, has
796 had no active part in the ceremony, but he now steps for-
793 ward. There is a sudden hush.

"Daddy" becomes an intimate, vivid part of the group. Coming down among the congregation, he addresses his talk now to one individual, now to another, dropping frequently into the southern Negro dialect. The theme of his address is, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap." The main issue, however, is often sidetracked, and the speaker comments in turn upon world politics, the war, anecdotes of his own trips abroad, his persecution by enemies, all of whom "the Lord struck down dead," and the general condition of the local community. The entire discourse is interspersed with humorous sayings that find a delighted response. "Daddy" advises his followers strongly against trusting anyone. "If the angel from Heaven comes down an wants an extra pair of wings, don't trust him," he warns. "Tell him you ain't got no time to keep books today. He have to pay cash." Near the conclusion of his talk the Bishop says that he can accomplish anything he chooses, even to sinking ships, destroying fleets of planes, or conquering entire nations. He is not the actual power, he says, but he is so close to it that he has only to reach out his hand and pull the switch.

After every sentence or two that "Daddy" utters his listeners echo his statements with such remarks as "Ain't it so, Daddy," "Dat is duh trute," "Yes Daddy," "You tell em, Daddy," "Hallelujah," "Amen." These utterances do not always agree with what the speaker has just said but nevertheless are meant to express thorough approbation. At one time "Daddy" tosses to a woman in the congregation a
[786] rose he has used in illustrating a point in his sermon. This

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unexpected honor overcomes the recipient to such an extent that she is seized with violent convulsions.

Noticing that the hour is growing late, the Bishop abruptly ends his talk. There follows a prayer, led by one of the deacons and chanted rather than spoken. At the end of each line the man's voice catches on a high sob verging on hysteria, and those in the congregation murmur an almost inaudible echo of the speaker's plea. The other deacons join in the recital and in the wild sobbing. At the conclusion of the prayer a high pitch of excitement is reached.

It is now time for the Bishop to take leave of his flock. Slowly, reverently, his attendants bring him his top coat and high Stetson hat. From his pocket "Daddy" draws out a large white handkerchief which he waves slowly in accompaniment to the closing hymn, a corrupt version of *Nearer My God To Thee*. The worshipers, too, wave their handkerchiefs in solemn tribute to their departing leader.

Shortly after a visit from the Bishop we pursued our course of research in Brownville. We found a number of people who had been named for week days or the month in which they had been born. Thursday Jones,* when questioned about this particular custom, replied, "Dey name me dat way jis cuz uh happen tuh be bawn on Tursday, I guess. Sech tings seem tuh be in our fambly. I hab an uncle whose name is Monday Collins. It seem tuh come duh fus ting tuh folks' mine tuh name duh babies fuh duh day dey is bawn on." [20]

Another man ** told us, "We hab membuhs in our fambly name Monday, Friday, July an Augus. Dey jis didn tink ub any name tuh call em but duh day dey wuz bawn.[20] Deah wuz two brudduhs call July an Augus an deah two sons wuz name aftuh um. Some uh deze names go all duh way back tuh slabery time. Duh chillun jis name aftuh duh kin."

* *Thursday Jones, Brownville.*
** *John Blackshear, 625 Grapevine Avenue.*

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829 dishes, and tools, of these people, he answered, "Dey would
322 make any ting dey needed. Dey made spoons, trays, buckets. Dey made piggins an mawtuh an pestle from a lawg uh wood. Dey would make wooden cuttuhs fuh meat an vegetubble an would dress some uh dem wid pretty figyuhs." [704]

829 For their meetings, he said "Golla" Tom or another would beat the drum signalling them to gather; then all would sing
•796 and dance in a circle to the accompaniment of the drum.[23] The drums of death would also sound, summoning to the
533 "settin-up" or wake.[36] "Dey would have some hot drinks,"
764 recounted Tonie Houston, "sech as coffee an tea.[37] Den at duh time fuh buryin, duh drum would beat an all would lay flat on duh groun on dey faces befo duh body wuz placed in duh grave. Den all would rise and dance roun duh grave. Wen duh body wuz buried, duh drum would give signal wen all wuz tuh rise aw fall aw tuh dance aw sing." [18]

754 As to the magic of conjure, he had been well acquainted
789 with a "cunjuh man" who, he said, was a native of Africa and could disappear at will. However, this man, Dick Hamilton, had died three years previously.

There had also been living in Tatemville "Golla" Jones
829 Davis, an African, who, as affirmed by his relative, Solomon Davis, has not been heard of since his departure for his native land, some five or six years ago.

115 Richard Wright,* bent with age and rheumatism, talked at length about his childhood on the plantation, where he was one of seventy-five children owned by his "Boss." He
[322] attested to the skill exhibited in that day by the men in wood
[286] carving and the making of farm implements [704] and by the women in making cloth.

777 He was staunch in his belief in signs as he declared, "Deah's many tings wut's bad luck. Ef we come in duh house wid our hat on we hab tuh go back an den pull it off
[356] an den come in. Wen yuh clean duh house in duh day an

* *Richard Wright, Tatemville.*

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533 202 [115] Another native of Skidaway,* now living in Sandfly, also remembered drum codes being sent out from Skidaway.[26] A member of the Baptist Church, he has never heard drums beaten in the house of praise, but he described with great pride and earnestness the ceremony of a river baptism.

795 •796 "We gadduh at duh chuch wid duh candidates who comes all dressed ready fuh baptism in long wite robes. Duh deacons range duh folks in line, two by two. Den duh mahch tuh duh ribbuh begin, duh pastuh an duh deacons leadin duh way. Dis is a solemn time, an duh candidates an deah friens an relatives all rejoice. As we mahch we sing. Some uh duh [533] songs we sing is *I'm Gwine Down tuh duh Ribbuh ub Jawdan* an *Oh, Who Will Come an Go Wid Me?*

"Wen we git tuh duh ribbuh some uh duh folks is so happy an dey scream an jump roun so much dat some uh duh udduhs hab tuh hole em. Duh candidates is led intuh duh watuh, one by one, an baptize. Attuh duh baptizin dey change deah cloze an we all go tuh duh chuch fuh duh communion services."

754 301 789 [777] Here, as in many other sections, a silver coin is frequently worn on the ankle to insure good luck[8] and to give warning by turning black at any effort by an enemy to conjure the wearer.[12a, c, d] In regard to this custom of wearing a coin one woman who is married to a man "wid duh powuh tuh see tings"[22a,*] said, "Duh folks roun yuh use tuh weah five dolluh gole pieces on deah ankle, but hahd times jis nachly make dem gole pieces jump off."**

The same woman told that when she and her husband first moved to Sandfly several years ago, a neighbor employed a conjure man to put a spell on them to drive them away.

"I membuh wen deze folks cross duh way wuz cunjuhin us, an strikin roun, I went tuh duh sto an change a dolluh bill fuh one of deze silvuh dolluhs. It wuz roun an shiny as yuh

* *John Bivens, Baker's Crossing.*
** *Lee Baynes, Sandfly.*

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Sunbury

OUR CAR CAME TO AN ABRUPT STOP IN THE SANDY road before the board fence which enclosed a small group of weather-beaten clapboard houses. We called to a young Negro girl who lounged in a doorway and she came forward to see what we wanted. Almost simultaneously there appeared from the other houses scattered about the clearing a number of other persons.

Two women about thirty-five years old and nine or ten small children all approached the fence. At first they were rather wary, but their attitude gradually turned to friendliness and they hung over the high board fence, talking and laughing in great good humor. Elizabeth Roberts,* the young girl whom we had first seen, appeared to be the leader of the group.

We were interested to know if these people had river baptisms any more. "Duh Sunbury Baptis Church an duh Palmyra Baptis Church both hab baptizins," Elizabeth told us. "Cose it depend on how many folks wants tuh leab duh Presbyterian Church an jine duh Baptis. Mos ub us is already baptize."

"Where do they hold the baptisms?" we inquired.

The group all pointed in the direction of the river. "Right obuh deah in duh Sunbury Ribbuh," they chorused.

Elizabeth again took the initiative. "All duh candidates is robed in wite," she explained. "Duh preachuh come frum

* *Elizabeth Roberts, Sunbury.*

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795 Savannah an he is dressed in a long robe. He walk long an
•796 duh folks all mahch behine im. Dey goes down tuh duh rib-
[292] buh an sing as dey go. Dey alluz hab duh baptizin wen duh
[783] tide is goin out so duh watuh will wash duh sins away. Attuh dey all gits tuh duh ribbuh, dey stop an duh preachuh ast duh candidates tuh step fawwud. One by one he dip em in duh watuh an dey is buried in baptism. Wen dey is all baptize, duh preachuh pray tuh duh ribbuh an [43] ast dat all sins be taken away. Den all duh folks sing an shout an praise duh Lawd."

The little group leaning on the railing nodded in agreement and as if in memory of the ceremony their bodies swayed rhythmically. As we listened and watched we could almost see the white robed procession winding to the river bank; we could almost hear the chanting of the converts as their sins were washed away.

764 The conversation turned to burial customs in the section and the women told us that "settin-ups" were still held for those who died.

"We all sit wid duh body an sing an pray an keep duh spirit company," said one of them.

Another added, "At duh fewnul we sing an we puts our
[777] hands on duh cawpse tuh say goodbye. It bad luck not tuh do dis." [31]

We had heard in other communities that in case of death away from home the body is brought back to its native town for burial. This custom is also prevalent in Sunbury, we learned.

"Ebrybody wannuh be buried in deah own town," [1] Eliza-
[609] beth said. "An we nebuh bury strainjuhs wid our own folks. Ef a strainjuh die yuh, we bury em in duh strainjuh's lot." [3]

775 Emma Stevens,* tall and slim, a baby in her arms and several small children gathered about her, spoke up, "Yuh got

* *Emma Stevens, Sunbury.*

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285 of large round baskets, about twenty inches in diameter, with matching covers that fitted well down over the rim. Isaac used bulrushes and grasses for his material and worked with a sure deft touch that insured sturdy construction.

533 He remembered that drums had been used for a variety of
534 purposes during his youth. He said, "I use tuh dance tuh duh drum.[33] I recall wen dey beat duh drum tuh call duh
[202] people on Harris Neck tuhgedduh fuh a dance aw fewnul.[36] Cose, dey hab a diffunt beat wen dey call um tuh a settin-up aw fewnul frum duh one dey use tuh call um tuh a dance.
534 Deah wuz two kine uh drum. One dey call duh kittle drum, an one wuz duh bass drum. It stan bout two an a half foot
764 high. Dey use tuh alluz hab a settin-up wen somebody die. Wen folks would go tuh duh settin-up, dey would gib um bread an coffee.[37b, c]

795 "Dey still hole ribbuh baptisms yuh. Dey git tuh duh ribbuh an attuh dey pray an sing up on duh bank, duh
796 preachuh take duh candidates down in duh ribbuh. Fo he
[782] baptize each ub um, he say a prayuh tuh duh ribbuh an ax fuh all duh sins tuh be wash away."[63]

775 Remembering what we had been told about the haunted road to Maringo, we questioned Isaac and he said, "Yes'm, I hab heah bout duh hanted road tuh Maringo on duh Young Man Road. Lots uh folks say deah is spirits roun deah.[59] Wen yuh try tuh pass duh fawk in duh road, duh spirits stop yuh sometime an wohn let yuh by. Some uh duh spirits mus be good, fuh Ise heahd one story bout a man who wuz passin by an all ub a sudden his hawse jis stop shawt in his tracks. Jis wouldn go anudduh step. Duh man try an try, but he couldn make duh hawse moob. Den he see a spirit come long an it take hole ub duh hawse bridle an lead him long. Duh hawse go right long. Den duh spirit disappeah. I hab heahd lots uh stories bout dat road but uh nebuh see nuttn muhsef."

115 Our next interview was an unusually delightful one. Sit-

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789 juh on em too. They's made of haiah, an nails,[10] an grave-
754 yahd dut,[9] sometimes from pieces of cloth an string. They tie em all up in a lill bag. Some of em weahs it roun the wrist, some of em weahr it roun the neck,[11b] an some weahs a dime on the ankle. Then ef somebody put down cunjuh fuh em it tun black an [12a, c, d] they git anothuh one tuh wawd off the evil.[6] Some of em has a frizzled chicken in the yahd. People do say they kin dig up cunjuh an keep it frum wukin gense yuh.[12a]

754 "Yuh heah all the time bout folks wut is cunjuhed. They gits crippled up an ef they dohn do nuthin bout it, some of em dies."[15]

795 We asked if river baptisms were still held in the section
•796 and Liza answered, "Yes'm, they hole the baptisms right
[783] down yonduh in the rivuh. They always hole em on the ebb tide; that's so the sins be washed away. All the pruhcession mahch down tuh the rivuh. The preachuh leads the way. Fus the preachuh stan on the bank an pray. Then he take
[782] the candidates one by one an dip em in the watuh. Then he
[783] make a prayuh fuh the rivuh tuh wash away the sins.[63] I call that prayuh 'the matrinal.' "

Liza was unable to explain just what this term meant, but she said it was always applied to the prayer to the river.
764 She told us, too, that "settin-ups" were held for those who died and that the mourners sat up all night with the body
[533] and sang and prayed. "In the ole days they always use tuh beat the drum at the funeral an they still does it tuhday. As they take the body tuh the graveyahd, they beat the drum as they move long.[24] They put the body in the grave. Then they mahch roun an sing an beat the drum."

759 We had been told that several midwives rendered services to those residing in the section. We asked Liza about this and she told us, "Anna Johnson, she's my sistuh. She's a midwife an she tends tuh lots of folks roun heah. Those
[755] midwifes sho knows wut tuh do.[48] They use a shahp knife

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764 dey put salt on duh stomach tuh keep it frum purgin. Ebrybody put duh hands on um tuh say good-bye.[31]

[533] "On duh way tuh duh grabe dey beat duh drum as dey is mahchin long.[34] Wen duh body is put in duh grabe, ebrybody shout roun duh grabe in a succle, singin an prayin. Each one trow a hanful uh dut in duh grabe."[33]

527 The conversation shifted to topics of a more cheerful nature and Rachel told us that in former years at harvest time, they had been in the habit of holding "crop suppuhs."[35]

Her face creased itself into a delightful grin and her eyes shone as she told us, "Dat sho wuz a big time. We hab a big feas. All night we shouts an in duh mawnin right at sunrise we pray an bow low tuh duh sun. Muh great-gran—she [782] name Peggy—I membuh she pray ebry day, at sunrise, at noon, an at sunset. She kneel down wen she pray an at duh en she bow low tree times, facin duh sun."

535 Alec's thoughts in the meantime had turned to more trivial affairs. He went on to tell us about the various dances that are popular at the present-day social affairs.

"Cose we do duh Buzzud Lope,"[17] he began. "Ebrybody knows dat. Den we alluz does an' iuh dance. We calls it 'Come Down tuh duh Myuh.' We dance roun an shake duh han an fiddle duh foot. One ub us kneel down in duh middle uh duh succle. Den we all call out an rise an shout roun, an we all fling duh foot agen."

795 In answer to our question about river baptisms the old people informed us that they are still held in the section.
796 Alec described these. "We all sing an pray an duh preachuh pray tuh duh Lord. Cose duh candidate caahn be save less he reely want tuh be. Duh preachuh an duh candidates goes [782] down in duh watuh. Den duh preachuh make a prayuh tuh [783] duh ribbuh an duh ribbuh washes duh sin away."[63]

It is bad luck to eat certain types of food, Rachel told us. 262 This belief had never influenced Rachel or Alec but they 777

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POSSUM POINT

231 hollowed-out log set on legs served as a watering trough for the ox.

764 Susan told us about the death of her mother, Rachel La Conte, who had come from Liberty County. "She die right in dis house. Dey measure uh wid a string. Dey beat duh [533] drum tuh tell ebrybody bout duh settin-up.[26] We all set [202] up wid duh body. We hab a big wash pot full uh coffee an hab a big sack uh soda crackuh fuh duh folks.[27b, c] Ebrybody place dey han bery light on uh eahs an on uh nose an den dey say, 'Dohn call me. I ain ready fuh tuh go yit.' [30, 31]

"We bury uh by tawch light attuh dahk. Ebrybody [782] mahch roun duh grabe in a succle. Ebry night attuh duh [795] fewnul I put food on duh poach fuh duh spirit tuh come git it.[54, 55]

533 "In duh ole days dey beat duh drum tuh call duh people
534 tuh duh fewnul.[24] Dey beat it slow—boom—boom—boom.
202 Wen dey wannuh stuhrup duh folks fuh a dance aw frolic, dey beats duh drum fas. Den dey knows it ain fuh no fewnul an dat it's fuh a good time. Duh people neahby, wen dey heahs it, beats deah drum an das how dey sends a message so udduh folks gits it.[26]

534 "I kin membuh two kine uh drum. Deah wuz duh lill kittle drum. Hit wuz bout fifteen inches cross an tree an a half foot high. Dat wuz duh drum dey beat fuh a settin-up."

795 Susan, too, gave us a description of the river baptisms. "Dey baptize in duh watuh down at duh landin. All duh [792] candidates is dressed in wite. Dey all confess deah sins an [783] say dey want tuh be save.

"We all mahch long in a line an sing an pray. Wen we
795 git tuh duh ribbuh bank, we stop an duh preachuh say a long
796 prayuh tuh duh Lawd. Den duh preachuh take duh candi-
[782] dates one by one and dey go down in duh ribbuh. Duh
[783] preachuh he say a prayuh tuh duh ribbuh. Dey alluz bap-

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795 tize on duh ebb tide cuz duh ribbuh is spose tuh wash duh
796 sins away.[63] All duh folks sing a song called *All Muh Sins*
783 *Done Wash Away.*"
(533)

There were several white chickens wandering about the
231 yard and Susan told us that her principal reason for keep-
754 ing them was that they possessed the power to dig up con-
jure.[13]

829 We asked the old woman if she had ever known any Afri-
cans, and she said, "I know one man. He name Primus
O'Neal. He come frum Africa an he talk funny talk. He
call a pot a 'jam.' I membuh he say, 'Lemme cook sumpm
fuh nyam.' He mean sumpm fuh tuh eat."

115 It later developed that this same Primus O'Neal was the
grandfather of Rosa Grant * whom we found living in a
small gray cottage on the Townsend Road. Rosa was sixty-
five years old, with copper-colored skin and rather aquiline
features.

115 We asked about her grandfather and she told us some of
the things of which she had heard him speak.

829 "He tell me dey nebuh hab tuh plant in Africa. Dey
gadduh wile okra an palmettuh cabbage fuh food frum duh
forres. He tell bout a wine call 'figlin watuh' dat dey drink
in Africa. But he nebuh say jis how dey make it.

115 "Muh gran come frum Africa too. Huh name wuz Ryna.
I membuh wen I wuz a chile seein muh gran Ryna pray.
782 Ebry mawnin at sun-up she kneel on duh flo in uh ruhm an
829 bow obuh an tech uh head tuh duh flo tree time. Den she
say a prayuh. I dohn membuh jis wut she say, but one wud
she say use tuh make us chillun laugh. I membuh it wuz
'ashamnegad.' Wen she finish prayin she say 'Ameen,
ameen, ameen.'

829 "She talk plenty bout cunjuh.[15] Say dat wen a pusson
bin made tuh swell up frum a ebil spell, dey got tuh hab
somebody tuh pray an drag fuhrum. Ef yuh hab a pain aw

* *Rosa Grant, Townsend Road, Possum Point.*

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535 point Aunty Jane rose to give us an exhibition of two dances, the Buzzard Lope and the Snake Hip.[17]

361 Across the highway from Aunty Jane's settlement, about one mile north of Darien, back of a turpentine still, is an irregular settlement of small houses, most of which are enclosed by high dilapidated paling fences. Here Wallace 115 Quarterman * occupied a cabin with his daughter, Abby Gibson. Wallace was old but with a clear mind, and he enjoyed a high standing in his community. We felt that he would know about the old beliefs and customs.

[361] We left the highway on a narrow dirt road, little more than a path through the bush, and after much winding in [351] and out we came upon a street of Negro cabins with their enclosed yards, vegetable patches, and tumbled down sheds. Wallace was sitting on the porch of Abby's house. Lizzie Sanders volunteered to be our guide and paid a visit to Wallace along with us.

We asked him how old he was and where he was born.

"Ise bawn July 14, 1844. Now figguh dat out fuh yuhsef, missus. Ise bawn at Sout Hampton, Libuty County, an [567] I belong tuh Roswell King, but he done die long bout sometime in duh fifties an Ise sole fuh debt tuh Cunl Fred Waring on Skidaway Ilun. Ise bin bout fifteen wen I sen tuh Skidaway."

124 For a long time we had wanted to establish some connection with Skidaway Island that reached back before the War between the States. We questioned Wallace about the church on Skidaway.

• 796 "We sho did hab big time goin tuh chuch in doze days. Not many uh deze Nigguhs kin shout tuhday duh way us [534] could den. Yuh needs a drum fuh shoutin."

We asked if they shouted to a drum then.

534 "We sho did. We beat a drum at duh chuch an we beat a 533 drum on duh way tuh duh grabeyahd tuh bury um. We 764

* *Wallace Quarterman, Darien. Deceased autumn, 1938.*

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793 from the draught. This was Preacher Little who, we were
794 afterwards told, was an itinerant preacher, not a native to
(292) the island but a type native to the district.

•796 His text, read in a loud, commanding voice, was "You ah
537 the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its savory, where-
with shall it be salt; it is then no good and should be trompled
intuh earth." The exposition of this pronouncement was
awaited with breathless interest.

The sermon that followed, however, was in no way connected with the text. Preacher Little divided his sermon into three parts and lectured his congregation on "straying frum duh paat." What he said was not really coherent. Words stood out, phrases rang in our ears, quotations from the Bible resounded at random but that was the beginning and the end. The impelling element was the sound of Preacher Little's voice.

796 In each part he began slowly, quietly, persuading and rea-
786 soning with his congregation. His voice would carry a
pleading question to them and they would answer, "Huh."[29]
As he progressed, the quiet reasoning diminished; he shouted to his listeners. The "Huh—Huh's" became loud, guttural, vibrating grunts that echoed through the little building. Regular stamping of the feet began; the vibration penetrated into every corner. It was impossible not to think of the beating of the drum. The regular rhythmic, swelling noise was deafening. It meant agreement with Preacher Little. It urged him on to greater heights until his shouting voice not only seemed to fill the church but to reverberate from wall to wall. This climax was reached three times, at the end of each of the three parts of the sermon. Each time it seemed to act as a great emotional purge to the listeners and leave them happily exhausted.

796 When the sermon ended, spirituals were sung under the
able direction of a young Negro named George Smith.* The
533

* *George Smith, Sapelo Island and Brunswick.*

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796 singing was enhanced by the fervor and the earnest simplicity
533 with which it was presented. Shining countenances raised heavenward, voices lifted exultantly, and feet beating rhythmically in accompaniment, the congregation entered wholeheartedly into the singing and seemed oblivious of everything else.

538 The next day on the boat returning to the mainland, Smith, young and well educated, tried to remember some of the tales told him when he was a boy. They were mostly the better known ones, except the Fox and the Rabbit, which concerned the Fox thriftily planting sweet potatoes and the Rabbit digging them up.

763 Prevalent beliefs covered wider ground. If an owl hoots
825 on top of the house or near the house, it is supposed to be a sign of death.[44] A counteractive is to throw salt on the fire,
789 burn an old shoe, or turn pockets wrong side out. If a rooster comes upon the porch and starts crowing, it is a sign of death in the house.[13b] It is also considered bad luck
484 to start on a journey and have to turn back. The method
777 employed to ward off disaster is to draw a cross where you
789 turned back and spit on it. We were told that most of the island Negroes believed in root doctors, but that they im-
759 ported them from the mainland. There were none on the island.

775 Smith admitted that he knew very little about the Negroes' belief in spirits. He did know that if a person had something that the spirit wanted very badly that person would be haunted by the spirit.

231 A frizzled chicken is known as a wise chicken and is used
825 to find lost articles. If something has been buried and its place forgotten, a frizzled chicken can, according to the islanders, find the place and scratch up the lost article.[13a]

821 Smith remembered hearing the older Negroes tell of having
796 watches on certain definite occasions when they sat up all night waiting for sunrise. When the sun at last appeared

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821 over the horizon, they would start a sun-dance and bow to
•796 the sun.

764 Death watches he knew nothing about, except present-day customs. However, he did say that the snake known as the
[825] coach-whip was sometimes wrapped around the neck of a person supposedly dead and its tail put in the person's mouth to see if he were still breathing.

527 We questioned young Smith about the festivals that the other Negroes had described and he told us that during the harvesting season various celebrations are still held.[38]

000 The boat neared the mainland. Our trip was over. As we bade goodbye to our guide, we cast a look of farewell at the dim outline of the tropical island. On the journey homeward impressions received during our stay on Sapelo crowded against one another in disturbing sequence. Innumerable memories assailed us. Faintly the echo of shouting rose and fell in the distance. The measured chanting of voices and the pounding of feet seemed to follow us across the water.

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829 ple an dey all say dey plant duh crop an dey dohn hadduh
[567] wuk it. I heah lot ub em tell how dey git obuh yuh. Dey trap em on a boat wid a red flag."

759 Old Tom Floyd was not the only root doctor Floyd could remember. There were many others, he said, some still living and plying their trade.[48]

"I knows a root makuh now," he told us. "Uncle Quawt, he root makuh. Does yuh know him?"

We replied that we had known Quarterman for some time but that he had never told us he could work roots.

759 "Maybe he ain tell yuh but he kin wuk em all right.[48] He
754 kin put a cunjuh on wid a goofa bag as good as anybody.
789 Now, I tell yuh bout im. Deah's two felluhs in Brunswick wut does a lill killin an wen duh case is call, two buzzud light on duh cote house an wen duh men come up befo duh jedge, he let um go free. Now, Uncle Quawt, he had sumpm tuh do wid dat. Dey ain so many root makuhs lef."

829 Floyd, too, had heard of Alexander, the old African root maker.

"Yes'm, Ise heahd much bout im. He wuz still libin wen I wuz a boy. Ise heahd em tell plenty uh tales bout im. Dey say duh boat leab fuh Savannah an Alexanduh he yuh. He say good-bye frum yuh an tell em tuh go on widout im but he say he see em deah an wen duh boat git tuh Savannah, Alexanduh he in Savannah on duh dock tuh ketch duh line."

534 Pleasant memories associated with the social activities of
535 the past caused Floyd to ponder abstractedly for a time. Finally he roused himself and told us, "We use tuh dance roun tuh a drum an a rattle goad. Dey could make good drum frum hawg an bass drum frum cow.[25] Doze days dey
533 ain only beat duh drum fuh dancin; dey beat it on duh way
[764] tuh duh grabe yahd.[24] Dat wuz fuh duh det mahch wen dey use tuh carry duh body in a wagon. Dey hab lot uh singin
[795] den too an dey hab singin at duh baptizin. Den dey baptize
[796] em in duh ribbuh jis lak dey does now. Dey sing wid all duh
[783]

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533 candidates walkin in wite robes tuh duh ribbuh an duh
795 preachuh he dip em on duh ebb tide an he pray duh ribbuh
796 tuh take duh sin away.[63] Dey ain mine gittin wet in duh
783 ribbuh.

"Heahd bout duh Ibo's Landing? Das duh place weah
567 dey bring duh Ibos obuh in a slabe ship an wen dey git yuh,
829 dey ain lak it an so dey all staht singin an dey mahch right down in duh ribbuh tuh mahch back tuh Africa, but dey ain able tuh git deah. Dey gits drown."

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858 Children are expected from Sea Island marriages, whether they are the
[581] couple's own or just living with them. Children are highly prized re-
(847) gardless of the financial condition of the parents, and abortion is rare and generally viewed as an abomination against God and nature. If a
592 young couple joins a parent's household, rather than establishing a new
855 one, the elder members of the family usually take responsibility for the
887 care and discipline of the children. Many elderly residents, the guardians of several generations of children, attribute their longevity and good health to the belief that they *cannot* die until all the children for whom they are responsible are grown and able to care for themselves, or until their responsibilities are delegated to someone else. Some chil-
855 dren are reared by sisters, aunts, uncles, or even distant cousins. It is not unusual for a child to reach adulthood living not more than a block from the natural parent but residing with another relative, who is per-
848 haps childless or more financially secure. Even children born out of
855 wedlock generally know who their fathers and grandparents are. These children are given the same respect in the community as legitimate children and are as likely to be reared by the paternal side of the family as by the maternal side.[45]

795 The church is probably the most important social organization in
• 796 the Sea Island communities. Outwardly, the Sunday services follow the patterns prescribed for Baptist and Methodist churches and are thus
779 based on Christian doctrine. Some of the beliefs of black Christians in
794 the Sea Islands are quite distinctive. For example, I have heard many elderly residents speak of a tripartite division of the human being into body, soul, and spirit, whereas Christian doctrine teaches that a person has only a body and a soul which is synonymous with the spirit. Ac-
775 cording to many elderly island residents, when one dies, only the soul
794 returns to the kingdom of God. The body and spirit remain on earth. And although the soul of the dead person cannot harm the living, the spirit can, at will, cause another to harm him- or herself.[46]

This concept of a tripartite body, soul, and spirit, with the body
[170] and spirit remaining on earth after death and able to influence the living, is widespread in West Africa today. Many African peoples do not conceive of any geographical separation between the real world and the spirit world; as soon as the body dies physically, they believe the person arrives in the spirit world.[47] To these physical and spiritual entities, some societies add a belief in a "shadow" entity.[48] The Sea

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764 be for that of an elderly person who had acquired many friends and relatives over the years.

795 The Sea Island churches are the mainstay of the community and are always full of life, vigor, and energy. Many of them have long and illustrious histories. The Hebrew United Presbyterian Church on Johns Island, for example, was organized in 1868 after the white Presbyterian church no longer admitted blacks to worship at its services or in its building. The blacks held services in a bush tent until a new 346 building could be put together out of lumber left on Seabrook and 795 Kiawah beaches by a shipwreck. At the time the island could be reached only by boat, and according to the church historian, the organizing members gathered the wood, put it on a raft, and floated it to the construction site.

Brick Church, located on St. Helena Island, is a Baptist church with an even longer history. It was constructed by slaves for their mas- [567] ters in 1855. In 1862 the slaves, who had been permitted to worship in the balcony, took over the church when the white masters fled the island during the Civil War. Before Penn School (the first normal indus- [874] trial and agricultural school for the education of blacks in South Carolina) was erected in 1864, the school's founder, Laura Towne, held classes in this church. An elegant two-story structure, Brick Church has been standing firm and serene for more than a century on the grounds of what is now Penn School Center.[53]

•796 The Sea Island church services are lively and enthusiastic. At a good Baptist or African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Sunday morning 794 service, the singing and praising will be audible for many miles. If there is a pianist, drummer, guitarist, or tambourinist, the service is even more energetic. The musical instruments are secondary, however, to the congregation's expressions of joy through handclapping, handshaking, and general rocking and swaying. It is literally impossible to attend these services and not be moved to participate actively. Even the smallest child attempts to move in time to the beat of the songs. The [793] rhythm is also a very important part of the sermons. The minister uses many rhetorical devices to involve his congregation in the service, [537] chief of which is the repetition of words and phrases at the beginning and end of each statement (see Chapter 3). The parishioners are mesmerized by the flow, rhythm, and steady recurrence of the repetitions, and their responses keep the service alive and active.

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793 Often the test of a good Sea Island minister is how well he can
537 arouse and excite his parishioners. Most of the ministers are from the
area and know well the rhetorical skills and techniques necessary to
•796 keep a congregation involved in the service. From the time when
young children begin going to the church services, they learn that rhet-
orical skills are to be praised, practiced, and deeply venerated as essen-
[871] tial characteristics of learned people. Learning, to the islanders, does
not necessarily mean college education. Most of the Sea Island minis-
ters have had no formal education at all, yet they could equal and
surpass the most prolific expositors of the canons of rhetoric. For ex-
ample, though this speaker has never heard of Cicero or studied the
classical theories of rhetoric, note the unusual skill with which he
makes his plea to the congregation, creating the long, flowing, master-
fully constructed phrases characteristic of Ciceronian style:

Heavenly Father
[539] Look at Reverend Pinckney one more time
Who is going to unfold the word of eternal truth
Want you to please, dear Jesus
Give him a silver trumpet
[So] he can coax and call some more ushers into this fold
And then, then, then, my Master
Look at the mistress of ceremonies
Jesus
Want you to plant her feet deep down in the soil, Master
Where she'll never be [up]rooted by the storm of life[54]

796 Often when a sermon is completed, the minister will begin to sing.
533 It is essential for a Sea Island minister to be a good singer as well as a
good speaker. Singing is a regular part of the islanders' daily lives.
[793] Many older people sing with fervor and passion as they work in their
gardens or in the fields, even when they are alone. Singing is thought
[794] to be good for the body, the spirit, and the soul: it enlivens the spirit,
which permeates the soul, giving it spiritual strength, and the soul in
turn revitalizes the body with physical strength to carry on in times of
despair or when physically exhausted. During the church services sing-
ing often stirs and excites an already "happy" congregation. When the
[786] music begins, some of the congregants throw up their hands, jerking
and shaking their bodies in the movements of the shout. The music

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starts slowly and softly, gradually increasing in tempo while the shouters strive to keep up with it; it becomes louder and faster until they are totally spent.

The call-and-response style is still the tradition of worship in Sea Island churches, just as it is in most southern black churches. The minister calls out a statement, and the congregation repeats it or gives a rhythmic and raucous reply. Though many of the men act as responders to the ministers, few shout or become "happy" as many of the women do. However, those who do join in the movements of the shout do so with considerable zeal. These frenzied shouts are related to the practices of certain African religious cults.[55] In 1904 a woman wrote of her encounters with the spirituals and shouts of the Sea Islands and asked an inhabitant what explained them. The respondent replied that when the preacher read from the Bible how those "dry bones ter lib ergin," something deep within her would come to life and she would begin to holler and sing some old "shout" song from Africa.[56] I observed similar call-and-response services in Nigeria: though I could not always understand what was being said in the language of the service, I found that I could nevertheless join in singing the reply.

Today there are many customs and practices unique to the Sea Islands and to parts of Africa which offer investigators rich insights into African and African-American traditions. The Sea Island language and oral literature did not develop and survive apart from the social and cultural environment which produced them. The extended family household and the Sea Island burial customs, religious beliefs, and styles of worship are no less evidence of African roots and preservations than is the language itself. As long as these roots remain viable, the Sea Island people will maintain their cultural integrity; only when such traditional roots die will their culture die. I hope that an awareness of these influences upon the culture will aid in understanding the African influences upon the language and literature discussed in the following chapters.

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538 not only on the children but on the adults who often came to visit her as
115 well. Many times the children sat with their eyes glued to her face or staring dazed into the fire, hypnotized by the slow, steady rhythm of her voice unfolding the bizarre events of her tale. At times, her voice became so low, and she paused so long, that some of the younger children stirred, and the older ones lashed out in anger at them for disturbing the chilling mood that had been created. In tales of hags, ghosts, and other strange happenings, the audience did not usually respond quickly as they did with other, less suspenseful, tales, primarily because topics such as these were not taken lightly by the is-
[M1] landers. Many are staunch believers in hags, ghosts, voodoo, and the occult. Thus tales of this kind were told not only for entertainment but to inform or to reaffirm the listeners' belief in the existence of these seen and unseen forces rampant throughout the islands and the universe.

538 Furthermore, such grave topics often had an aesthetic appeal somewhat different from that of funny or historical tales. The audience was not lively, loud, or as energetic as it would be when listening to the exploits of Ber Rabbit. Witty stories are deserving of spirited and excited responses. In listening to tales of the supernatural, the audience tended to be not only quiet but filled with awe and reverence, even more for one who knew of such things by firsthand experience than for the topic itself. There was some verbal interplay between Miss Deeley and her audience, but it was much more subdued than even in prayers
[M4] and sermons. In prayers and sermons the audience is expected to par-
[M6] ticipate openly in the event. People are free to speak as loud and become as verbally unrestrained as they want "when the spirit hits them." In listening to tales like Miss Deeley's, the audience was restrained both by the subject and by the speaker's use of a lowered, even whispered, tone to help create an eerie effect; many times the listeners had to strain to hear every word. As a result, most displays from the audience were in the form of low moans ("ummmm . . . uh") or an occasional "yeah, man," "shonuf so" or "where you de say you see em?" In these narratives—especially where a story was felt to have an actual basis in fact—the listeners' questions were not rhetorical, and the speaker took time out from the events of the tale to answer them.

159 Miss Deeley was one of the few informants who still included
533 songs in some of the tales told. Songs are an inherent part of most West
538 African stories, and of stories told throughout the Caribbean, because

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A Sermon

793
538

For true, the Lord ben give em silver trumpet,
and he shonuf know how for blow em!

The Reverend Renty Pinckney is minister of New Jerusalem AME Church on Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina. His sermon is not presented in its entirety here, because it is very long. The Reverend Mr. Pinckney, like most island ministers, has memorized the Bible thoroughly; his creativity is revealed by his ability to join scattered allusions into a cohesive whole.[23]

53
796

The Bread of Life

Rev. Renty Pinckney
New Jerusalem AME Church
Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina
July 1980

God is the Bread of Life
God will feed you when you get hungry *Oh yes! I know he will. All right! Yeah. Amen! Yes sir!*

Look on the mountain
Beside the hill of Galilee *My Lord!*

Watch his disciple
Riding on the sea *Yeah! Uh huh!*

Tossing by the wind and rain *Yeah. Come up*

Going over the sea of temptation *Uh hum*

Brother, I don't know
But I begin to think
In this Christian life *Yes!*

Sometime you gone be toss *Yes, yeah!*

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53 By the wind of life *Yes, my Lord!*
•796 The wind gonna blow you
From one side to the other *Yes!*

On this Christian journey

The way ain't gone be easy on us children *No!*

And the disciple as they was going across *Oh yes sir! Yeah.*

The wind was tossing
As they was going over to Cana *All right! Uh hum*

The King was on the safe [same] side
To the Sea of Galilee *All right*

To the land Gothen
It was so sufficient size
To be call a city *Yeah, right! Yeah*
It was close to the seashore *Shore. Yes*

One half mile long
Quarter of a mile wide *Yes sir!*

Brother, I know
Jesus would be so glad *So pleased!*

There he was among them
Brothren of our Lord
And his disciple *Yes! Yes sir. Oh yes*

The Gospel!
Of John was formed in writing *Writing*

Jesus was towhead *All right*

They begin to wonder brother *Yeah!*
How is this could be *Yeah!*
We left him on the other shore *Yeah*
But this morning we are here *Yes, here. My Lord!*

Jesus don't have a boat *Boat.*

Don't have a airplane *Ah hah! Yeah!*

Here he are on the bank this morning *Yes sir*

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Yea God! *Yeah God! Amen!*

What a fortune
All the power in he hand *Oh Yeah!*
Got power for we *Yeah*
When we get hungry *Yeah*
He's able to feed us *Yes sir*

O Lordy!
Come to tell you children *Yes!*
Jesus! is the Bread of Life *Jesus!*

My brothren *My God!*
Come to him *All right!*
Come to him *Yeah!*
He feed you when you get hungry *All right. Oh yeah!*

He will be on the ark *Yeah!*

Yea God! *My God*

Upon the montain someone said
Jesus said *Yeah!*

If you come to me
I'll give you water *Water*

In dry land *Dry land!*

O Lordy!
Jesus is the Bread of Life *Yes!*

How do you know *Uh huh!*

He's the Bread of Life? *Yeah!*

When he begins to speak *Yeah!*

He's the Bread of Life, brothren *Yeah!*

O Lordy!
I begin to think back *Yeah!*

In Moses time
when he said *Yeah!*

God feed them *Oh yeah!*

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•796

With manna from on heaven
My brother! *All right, yeah!*

I was out in the wilderness
Didn't had nothing to eat *Uh huh*

God feed them *My Lord!*

With manna from on high *Yes!*

To stop a little while

(Pause)

I be able to preach for you *Yeah! All right*

If you feed me with that bread *Yeah! All right*

I be able to call him *Yeah*

If you feed me with that bread *Yes*

O Lordy! *Oh Lord!*

I be able to book up *Yeah! All right*

Pick up my brother *Yes!*

Who is down in the ditch this morning *Oh yeah!*

If you feed me this morning *Yes! Lord*

I be able to call *Yeah Lord*

The lost sinner home *Yeah!*

O Lordy!
Jesus!
Is the Bread of Life *Yeah*

God knows
Somebody look *Yes*

Back in space of time *Yes!*

Saw Jesus
Coming through
Seventy-two generations *Yes. Uh huh*

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

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One said
When he look at Jesus *Oh yes!*

Yea God! *Yea God!*

His feet *All right*

Look like polish brass *Yeah!*

Eye look
Like a consuming fire *Consuming fire*

Hair look
Like lamb wool *Lamb wool*

Pressing the wine press *Yeah!*

All by himself *By himself*

Coming down to the gate *Yeah!*

To let you and I
Have a right *Right*

To the Tree of Life
O Lordy! *Oh Lordy!*

Jesus is alive *All right!*

My brothers *Yes!*

When I get hungry *Ah yeah!*

My soul get hungry
I go to Him *Yeah. All right!*

And say unto Him *Yeah. That's right!*

God I want you
Feed me with the Bread of Life *Yes!*

Feed me *Feed me!*

Til I want no more *Want no more!*

Then at last *At last!*

In this old world *Yes! This old world. Thank you! At last. Yes sir. Step right on up. All right*

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
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(Long pause)

Brother, I don't know about you, friend *Yes*

But I begin to sing *Yeah!*

Deep down in my heart *All right! Sir!*

But Jesus is the Bread of Life *Uh huh! All right*

Great God! *Yes!*

Some how *Some how. Yeah!*

Some way *Some way!*

That same Jesus *That same Jesus!*

One day *Yes!*

I Look down *Yes sir! Yeah!*

Into the old pit *All right!*

A little wretch
Like me was
My brother *Yeah!*

Stoop down *Stoop down!*

And lift me up *Lift me up!*

Take my feet
Out of the mucky mire *Yeah!*

Climb up on
Rock of eternal ages
Establish my goings *Yeah! Yeah!*

Say unto me *Amen!*

I want you *All right!*

To go out into the world *Yeah!*

Tell man and women *Yeah!*

I said
I was dead
But I'm alive, brothren *I'm alive!*

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

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Tell them I said *Yeah. All right!*

When they get hungry *Yeah!*

If they would come to me *Yeah!*

I would feed them *I will feed them. Yes!*

Tell them I said *Yes*

When they get lonely
Don't have a friend *A friend*

I will be a friend for them *Yeah*

Tell them I said *Yeah*

When all bodies *Yeah*
Walk off from them
And put he name on every milepost *Oh Lord!*

I'll be right there with them *Yeah!*

Tell them I said *Yeah! Yeah!*

When mother, father
Forsake you *Oh yeah*

I be by your side *By your side*

O Lordy!
And when you come *Come, Jesus!*

To the end of your journey *Yeah!*

And you are weary *Weary!*

Of life my brother *Yeah!*

Old battle is won *Won!*

I'll be right there *Be right there!*

When the time come
My God almighty! *My Lord*

Gonna call the Angel *Yeah!*

Take care *Oh yeah!*

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
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I want you to
Stand around *Oh yeah!*

The throne this morning *Oh yes*

Want you to sing *Yeah!*

As you ever sing before
Somebody who will come out *Yeah!*

From Jerusalem *Yeah!*

Crying out
I know *All right!*

Back yonder *Yonder*

In yonder world *Yonder world*
I cry some Sunday

A charge *Jesus! A charge I have! Right*

To glorify *Glorify!*
My brother *My brother!*

I don't know
But I look across
In the amen corner *Corner*

See somebody *Yeah!*

Who cry out
One day *Yeah!*

I saw the lighthouse *Yeah! Oh yeah*

O Lordy! *My Lord*

I wanna be there! *Oh yeah!*

I wanna be there! *Oh yeah! Oh yeah!*

I wanna be there! *Oh yes! I wanna be there!*

Over yonder

(Long pause)

I wanna view the beauty land
Where God eternal glory *Eternal glory!*

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

53 Where all wicked *Wicked*

• 796 Shall cease *Cease, cease! Yes Lord!*

All weary soul *All weary soul!*

Shall be at rest *Rest!*

Jesus said
I am the Bread *I am the Bread. The Bread. I am the Bread*
Of Life

Let us Pray *All right! Yes sir! Yes Lord! Let us pray!*

. . . . . .

538 Gullah Tales Exemplifying Audience Participation

(524) RIDDLER: Round like a top. Deep like a cup.
Mississippi river ain't full em up!

RESPONDENT: A sifter (strainer)

The reply from the audience is as germane to the Sea Island tales as it is to the prayers and sermons. However, the relaxed social atmosphere in which tales are told permits more exchange between speaker and listener than does the more orthodox surroundings of the prayers and sermons. The storytellers are not set apart from the group by a sacred podium or some other feature used to separate participating service members from the rest of the group. The listeners are therefore free to inject words and phrases, utter clarifying remarks, make gestures, or even help the teller along with his tale if appropriate. These interactions are very subtle and in no way interfere with the performance of a good tale. Likewise, no good tale can be told without the responses of an active audience, and no good tale can be told without the traditional "warming" period to create the right atmosphere. Like the prayers and sermons, the tales are usually preceded—if there is an audience present to act as respondents—by songs, spiritual or otherwise, and then by games, riddles, jokes, and dozens. As previously mentioned, the friendly teasing relaxes the audience and serves the same purpose as the *akuko eji awake nti* in Igbo: it prepares the group

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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178 There is continuity, too, in the religious services. Worship is
771 shared with others who appreciate the place of religious exercises in
the traditional structure of beliefs and values. The services continue to
796 be alive, energetic, and thoroughly enjoyable. Sermons and prayers
[173] are still passed on orally from one generation to the next, rather than
written down. The sermons are delivered by ministers who are natives
[193] of the island area, who speak the language, and who value the old
traditions.

178 Basketry and marketing remain important, for two reasons. They
have economic significance, but pride has also become a factor. The
285 children learning the basket traditions now are being told that the pat-
terns they are weaving repeat not only the patterns woven by their
grandparents but those of their African ancestors before them.

178 Fishing and netting continue to provide livelihoods for many,
though they are endangered by development and pollution of the wa-
226 ters. The islanders are "river and ocean" people. They gauge their
[821] workdays by the sun and by the ebb and flow of the tides. Some con-
tinue to use the marsh mud to fertilize their gardens. Others go to the
[823] banks of the ocean recesses to sit, fish, and tell tales of Ber Rabbit,
[538] tales often so vivid that many of the children swear they have actually
seen him bounding down the island paths. The fishing techniques and
[461] the love and respect for the ocean are being passed on to the children
[867] along with the tales, myths, lies, and legends of island life.
[868] The folklore and literature of the Sea Islands, unsurprisingly, are
more alive on the remote islands than on the more commercialized
178 ones. Though television, with its cartoon characters and talking pic-
538 tures, is an arch rival for even the most gifted teller, on stormy days
[207] and dark, gloomy nights no one is permitted to watch television be-
cause the islanders believe that it draws electricity and increases the
possibility that their homes could be struck by lightning. During these
times the children are gathered and told tales of Ber Rabbit, hants,
ghosts, witches, and hags, and no television program can hold an au-
dience as spellbound as some of the island storytellers.

178 Gullah, the island language, is being affected by population
changes, television, and the schools. Children are seldom named after
197 days of the week any more, but most are still given two names: one to
[551] use at school and one to use at home. Many of the words familiar to the
older generations are not being passed on to the children because the
[192] islanders, like most parents, want their children to attain good educa-

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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South Carolina

175 against them, as against Christ, and the transgression would ultimately
771 be rectified. Not that they refused to struggle against bondage, but rather
779 the Gullahs actively expressed their resistance and opposition through cultural tenacity, collective strength, a deep identification with Christ, and a conviction that with Him they had a covenant of freedom.

In any case, Christianity largely contributed to helping Gullahs consciously find a reason for being, and much of what they embraced in that religion conformed to this purpose. Thus, while it was difficult for them to grasp the concept behind the Ten Commandments, the story of the Jews being led out of Egypt could be easily internalized. More significantly, although intellectual perceptions of Jesus Christ caused some problems, and Gullahs did not totally comprehended the words of the Sermon on the Mount, nevertheless they saw their wordly existence as closely harmonizing with that of Christ's. They, as a people, were very much within the philosophical drift of the Sermon.

The Gullahs earnestness and simplicity in matters of religion left little room for doctrinal trappings that made Protestantism a religion fashioned to suit the needs of various social groups within Anglo-European society. From the teachings of Methodists and Baptists, Gullahs critically extracted that which gave meaning to their life-struggle, often devising novel interpretations of Christianity. The example of Christ provided uniqueness to their oppression since he too was a great sufferer. The comparison encouraged them to persevere because he was also the embodiment of a life-giving symbol. A ninety-two-year-old former slave
175 recounted the experience of her mother, who along with her five children
771 was sold away from their plantation. The mother was in a very dis-
787 traught state when a man, "white and shining" appeared with whom she had the following dialogue:
567

> "Sarah, Sarah, Sarah!"
> "Yes Sir."
> "What is you fretin' bout so?"
> "Sir, I'm a stranger here, parted from my husband, with five little children and not a morsel of bread."
> "You say you're parted from your husband? You're not parted from your husband. You're jest over a little slash of water. Suppose you had to undergo what I had to. I was nailed to the Cross of Mount Calvary. And I am here today. Who do you put your trust in?"[7]

175 The observations of black Northern teacher Charlotte Forten provide
771 a further example. Forten was a frequent visitor at the Praise House and
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witnessed the Gullahs' spiritual enthusiasm at these meetings. She noticed an old blind man, Maurice, who led the singing with a remarkable voice, and sang with special forcefulness the favorite "New Jerusalem." According to Forten, his voice rang out "a glad, triumphal sound," but Maurice's story was a tragic one: 175 771 779 796

His blindness was caused by a blow on the head from a loaded whip. He was struck by his master in a fit of anger. "I feel great distress when I become blind," said Maurice; "but den I went to seek de Lord; and ebber since I know I see in de next world, I always hab great satisfaction."[8]

Undoubtedly the pathos was eased somewhat by the Gullahs' rationalization that no matter how painful life was, someone had endured more than they, by their belief in the efficacy of salvation, and their expectation of immortality. Also, a great source of sustenance and faith in themselves derived from the Gullahs' presumption that they, like Christ, were historically guiltless. Gullahs reportedly possessed a "piety" of the heart. And they displayed an intuitive knowledge of the moral teachings of Christianity based upon practical experience, the socioreligious influence of African religion, and their own sense of collective survival. 175 771 779

Northern missionaries and teachers were impressed with how much Gullah religious expressions "sparkle with rich genius." Their belief in the noble nature of their circumstances helped to inspire creative inclinations. Gullahs called themselves a "peculiar people," and the words of an old Baptist deacon, recorded by Laura Towne, poignantly illustrate their communal spirituality. After planters deserted the Islands, Gullahs were compelled by Yankees to continue working in the cotton fields, often for little or nothing. Bondspeople wanted to cultivate provisions for their families, and just as the Gullahs were beginning to trust some white Northerners, another calamity befell them. In May 1862, Gullah men were, at bayonet point, conscripted into the Union Army by General David Hunter. The Gullahs feared the worse, that as their masters had warned, they were being sent to Cuba. All gathered together before the men were herded off. Fathers took children in their arms. Women gave way to expressions of grief that touched the hearts of the strongest observers of the scene. According to Towne, this was an exceedingly low point for the Gullahs, who had already withstood so much: 175 771 177 [701]

We, anxious and depressed, talked in low tones over this extra ordinary proceeding. . . . That evening we ladies went to the praise house and heard good, old Marcus exhort, Dagus pray and all sing. Marcus said he had often told all the

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institutions," and they were controlled from within. While confusion and vacillation occurred in other areas, within Gullah black societies there was organization, structure, and a cameraderie transferable to the slave quarters. Religion was their "fixed point" and the one realm where they needed authority if a group attitude was to be maintained. The concept of close communion was not completely new, given the African heritage. And black elders insisted that only members of the societies had a right to fellowship, for probably no event more symbolized integration of the individual into the socioreligious connection than acceptance of the elements representing the mystical blood and body of Christ. This ritual bound members of the various societies. The more exclusive the event, the more it impressed upon the communicants the responsibilities entailed. By joining society, Praise House, and church, an individual became a full participant in the community. Communion service epitomized this relationship. Communion was not only a method of initiating new converts into the socioreligious connection, but a way of reminding old members of their commitments. In addition to being "de Ark ob Safety" in the spiritual sense, communion was possibly a conduct agreement, restricting antisocial behavior yet inspiring a feeling of personal status very much in the way that Poro and Sande did in West Africa. Gullahs and Africans used their religion to fulfill sacred and secular communal needs in similar ways. In both instances the main emphasis was on community preservation. In each case an institution evolved that initiated individuals into society and committed them to abide by the customs, beliefs, and practices of the group for the sake of unity and order, while not ignoring the members' need to maintain a sense of self.

175 794 567 779 [779] [171]

Once the candidates were baptized and given communion, they were then members of the black society and the plantation Praise House. This new status gave former candidates the right to participate in the ring shout which was held at the praise meeting or in the home of the individual considered to be the most pious. One of the earliest available antebellum description of the ring shout was provided by Charles Lyell, who traveled through the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands in 1848. According to Lyle, on the Hopeton plantation of James Hamilton Couper, over twenty violins were silenced by the Methodist missionaries. Thus was music and dancing, the slaves' chief form of merrymaking, prohibited. Yet Methodists did allow slaves to engage in a form of physical exercise after prayer meetings, hence the origin of the "shout":

175 567 794 796 [797]

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175 569 794 796 797

At the Methodist prayer-meetings, they are permitted to move round rapidly in a ring, joining hands in token of brotherly love, presenting the right hand and then the left, in which maneuver, I am told, they sometimes contrive to take enough exercise to serve as a substitute for the dance, it being in fact a kind of spiritual boulanger.[36]

Physical expressions of religious fervor had been a feature of eighteenth-century Methodism. But the phenomenon had for the most part disappeared by the time of the Methodist slave conversion movement. While most Methodist missionaries frowned upon slaves' religious expressions, others heeded the instruction of William Capers, superintendent of missions, to allow the slaves to "be themselves" in matters of worship, so long as they abided by the discipline.[37] Hence, although worldly entertainment was forbidden, in some cases religious exercise was not. Baptist planters may have permitted the shout to exist because they saw no harm in such behavior and recognized the therapeutic effects of such "periodic releases." Thus, the shout ritual, among other [154] things, can be seen as a cathartic which enabled slaves to act out tensions, anxieties, and suppressed facets of themselves in an approved manner.

While Gullahs considered the shout to be a religious, even Christian practice, it was their own creation. At the Praise House, shouts only took place after service had ended and the benediction announced. Also, [533] while Gullahs sang Methodist and Baptist hymns at the praise meetings, when time came for a shout, the slaves sang only their own spirituals.[38]

175 569 796 786 535 533

Some accounts of the shout indicate that three or four people stood and sang, clapping and gesticulating, while others shuffled along on their heels, following each other in a circle, bending the knees slightly. The movements began slowly, a few going around and others joining in vocally and kinetically, while the song became faster and faster, "till at last only the most marked part of the refrain is sung and the shuffling, stamping and clapping get furious." According to Laura Towne, the floor shook dangerously, swaying rhythmically in time with the song. The dancers would get out of breath only after long periods of time, rest for awhile, and begin again, as the several outside of the ring kept up the singing. Charlotte Forten, a black teacher from the North, added color and imagery to the shout scene she witnessed:

. . . at the close of the Praise-Meeting, they all shake hands in the most solemn manner. Afterward, as a kind of appendix, they have a grand "shout" during

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which they sing their own hymns. . . . The first shout that we witnessed . . . impressed us very much. The large gloomy room, with its blackened walls—the wild whirling dance of the shouters,—the crowd of dark, eager faces gathered around,—the figure of the old blind man, whose excitement could hardly be controlled, and whose attitude and gestures while singing were very fine—and over all, the red glare of the burning pine-knot, which shed a circle of light around it, but only seemed to deepen and darken the shadows in the other parts of the room,—these all formed a wild, strange, and deeply impressive picture, not soon to be forgotten.[39]

175 567 796 786 535 533

Only members of the Praise House could join in the ring shout. Children were taught the shout at a very early age but never allowed to participate in or attend religious gatherings where the shout was performed until they became Praise House members. Once membership was attained, the new converts were welcomed into the Praise House by the opportunity to lead the ring shout and illustrate their ability.[40]

175 794 796 (869)

Most Northern teachers were at first appalled when they observed the shout. "I never saw anything so savage," wrote Laura Towne. "They call it a religious ceremony, but it seems more like a regular frolic to me." "The shout reminds one of a pagan performance," wrote a Ladies Island teacher. Arthur Sumner referred to it as "a strange, barbaric Central-African dance and song." Yet Gullahs insisted that the shout was religious and that each movement and step had spiritual significance. The steps never changed and even after freedom the shout was not altered by maneuvers that might have been learned at a "worldly dance." A watchful leader made sure that the feet were never crossed. Some whites, after coming to know and understand the Gullahs, reversed their initial critical stance. Laura Towne spent the rest of her life with the Gullahs after going there during the Civil War. She grew to love and respect the Gullahs enough to appreciate their forms of expression. "Went to a fine shout today," she wrote in her diary after a few years' stay on the Sea Islands.[41]

175 796

The Gullah ring shout, like the travel and the vision, involved an altered state of consciousness and had the attributes of "possession." It represented either an unusual behavior inspired and controlled by an outside agent, in this case the Holy Spirit, or the outside agent displaced the individual's personality and acted in its stead.[42] The background of the Gullah ring shout, a manifestation of possession trance, was West African in origin and an important characteristic of the initiation process.

175 796 786 787

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000 African initiation, beginning with a symbolic death, a journey to the spirit world, and complete rupture with one's past life and personality, was a time of lethargy, isolation, and prostration. As a result of contact with the spirits (nameless objects or ancestors) while in the bush, the novice's personality was modified in the image of a deity, and the individual was said to have become godlike through association—hence the Mano term "little spirits of the bush." Spirit possession took place during bush-life, itself represented as a period of unconsciousness when the initiate departed the domain of reason. The neophyte emerged from the experience "reborn," with a secondary spiritual personality inculcated as a type of conditioned reflex. When cultural and environmental forces interacted with these individual personalities from similar traditions, a psychological, collective process that was rarely conscious could be stimulated. The baptism or "sacred bath" purged the initiate's mind of previous attitudes, and future behavior would be an emulation of the true spirit within, or "little me."[43] Hence possession behavior can be interpreted as part of a society's efforts to incorporate into a coherent system the natural and supernatural worlds. Since possession was a public ceremony, where one demonstrated his or her individual spiritual presence in a sharing experiental manner, the phenomenon can be seen as solidifying human collectivity and providing a further basis for the participants to create a socioreligious network of communication and interaction. In the following description of a shout recorded more than fifty
• 796 years after slavery, it illustrates possession in full force among Sea Island
786 blacks, and suggests how certain African religious cult themes could have
787 been retained. This shout, in a St. Helena Island Praise House, involved
794 "welcoming and initiating" three teenage boys baptized into the church
[795] that morning. The Praise House leader announced that, "After givin' de right han' of fellowship to dese t'ree boys," the benediction would take place, after which "we'll gib dese boys de opportunity to exercise deyselbes wid de shout." The new converts were allowed to begin and demonstrate their ability to "exercise deyselbes." As people pushed back the benches, there was laughter and conversation as the shout began. The
[533] three youths stamped the floor, clapped their hands rhythmically, and moved around and around the open space in the center of the floor, "which was walled in by encouraging older people and other young people, all singing "De bell dun rung." The people commented on the shouters, such expressions as "Yoner look at Johnny, he exercise fur tru enty?"

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or "Com' on, let's git indey widdem." The others joined in, now paying little attention to the new members. The three initiates, while no longer leading the shout, were "determined boys in their teens," and seemed bent on holding the center of attention. They clapped and stamped louder, and again assumed leadership of the group of shouters: 796 786 787 794 533

Clear, distinct, and strong their treble voices took up the shout song. Above all the voices in the room theirs could be heard singing "De bell dun rung, de bell dun rung, de bell dun rung." Catching the contagious enthusiasm of these youthful voices, the others in the ring and those around the wall sang louder and louder. Yet above the rhythmic thud of the heels of the shouters as they jerked themselves around the circle in perfect two-four time, above the deafening din of the hand clapping, above the boisterous laughter and giggling of those who had stepped outside to "cool off" and were pressing one another against the quivering window sill of the open windows was heard the initiates with a note of frenzy in their shrill clear voices as they screamed the shout song, "De bell dun rung, de bell dun rung, de bell dun rung," which many of their associates in the circle were incoherently muttering with apparently little effort toward articulation. Just as a whirling dynamo generates a magnetic field, so this vibrant circle varying in diameter according to the endurance of the participants turning on, and on, seemed to create a desire which could not be satisfied until each one yielded to the irrestible urge to "git in dey widdem."[44]

The shout as a form of expression may have been a way of reconciling contradictory tendencies among individuals. Certainly not all of the participants were identically inspired, but probably had a number of different, authentic, subjective motivations and sought an outlet in a similar type of collective behavior. Hence, on the conscious level, the West African tradition notwithstanding, engaging in a ring shout had a variety of appeals for the Gullahs as slaves. It was a form of entertainment, a substitute for the social activity they were forced to relinquish, an individual release for pent-up frustrations and hostilities, a dimension of their religious spirit which linked them to natural and supernatural forces, and a mode of liaison among themselves. The following antebellum account of a Christmas shout on one of the Barnwell Sea Island plantations provides insight into the multifaceted meaning of this ceremony for the Gullahs: 154 796 175 796 567

The Negroes never went to sleep on the night before Xmas. They held prayers all night in the largest house at the settlement. This was Daddy January's house. Jack (foreman) could read and also August Baker our houseservant. Our mother had given both of them Testaments and Prayerbooks. I can still recall very dis-

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

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175 tinctly the scene. The benches had all been taken outside to make a clear floor.
•796 The table with the books was shoved into a corner. A brilliant fire of lightwood
567 was blazing in the chimney and a torch of the same hung in a tin bucket in a corner. Under this bucket the leader stood. She was a visitor. She was 50 or 60 years old, black and scrawney, only a few teeth left in her head. She had been
[786] singing for hours but still went on like one possessed. Gleaming with perspiration from head to heel—her dress at the bosom thrown wide open her head thrown back eyes closed, teeth prominent, head kerchief loose and hanging arms bare, clapping and shouting with a shrill ringing voice. I can recall in most of the other Negroes each with a different step, individual and characteristic. Some very much in earnest almost reverential, some heavy and stupid and some enjoying the fun. My grandmother's coachman "Sam" particularly, very black, good looking, smart and mischievous. I can recall the gleam of his eyes as he grinned at us in passing and improvised some peculiar contractions for our special benefit.[43]

771 For the Gullahs, then, the Christian experience was a means of com-
567 munal fulfillment on the individual as well as collective level, and plan-
177 tation life had aspects of an African village in microcosm. Gullahs attempted to exert control over their environment just as their African forbears had. For Africans it was a hostile natural ambiance that most threatened the group. For slaves it was an oppressive socioeconomic system that challenged their will to develop self-esteem and social cohesion. Gullahs successfully met that challenge and rose above bondage in a spir-
[178] itual and communal sense. By combining the edifying features of Christianity and African culture and philosophy, they created a practical folk religion that served them well, under the travail of slavery.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

114 Star Hall to travel to other parts of the country to
123 share their songs, in an effort to keep alive some of the older folk material. Each of these projects brought a complex mixture of success and problems and a renewed determination to keep trying.

131 For generations the Johns Island people were
133 relatively isolated from mainstream America. The low, flat island, covered with tidal creeks and
[505] marshes, farmland, and forests of oaks draped with gray Spanish moss, was accessible only by boat un-
[491] til the early part of the century, when bridges and causeways connecting it with the mainland began to be built. Cut off from the mainland, these de-
177 scendants of cotton plantation slaves retained many
178 aspects of the old slave culture: a regional dialect, Gullah, still marked by distinctly African and Caribbean traits; a large body of folktales, cures, and supernatural beliefs; and a folk version of Christianity with a "shouting" style of singing old spirituals and hymns and a local "praise house" form of worship.

344 Old and new institutions existed side by side. For many people, Moving Star Hall—a tiny, battered clapboard building—had been the central meeting place for nearly fifty years. It housed a "tend-the-sick" and burial society, a secret lodge, and a community of worship. Here the members
• [786] could express themselves freely and fully; in the Sunday night worship service each person took a turn preaching, testifying, praying, and raising a song.

177 Down the road a mile or so is Wesley Meth-
794 odist Church, where a number of these same peo-
346 ple attended regular Sunday services. Here the old folk ways were gradually being replaced by more formal modern practices. Wesley is a fine church with handsome pews, Methodist hymnals, a robed choir, and an organ. On the first Sunday of the
796 month everyone listened to the Reverend G. C.
533 Brown, who came from the mainland in the 1930s with a college degree, and sang hymns and spirituals led by the choir. But on the three Sundays a month when he preached in other churches, the congregation forgot about the organ and the hymnals and sang older spirituals, hymns, and shouts,

(P XII-A)

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

796 accompanied only by foot and hand rhythms; the
533 service became much more spontaneous, like that in Moving Star Hall.

177 In the intervening years, this evolution to-
178 ward more modern forms has continued. Moving
796 Star Hall is no longer being used for the intimate
(344) and intense prayer meetings or for the all-night watch meetings attended primarily by the older people. These important gatherings now take place in the larger churches. The Hall is currently home
(794) to a younger congregation, a Pentecostal church
(795) pastored by David Hunter, a member of one of the families very important to the original book. Here you find, along with more modern gospel songs and sermons, echoes of the old form of worship, but with the accompaniment of snare drum replacing the complex hand and foot rhythms of the shout. In the larger island churches, there is a vigorous contemporary religious culture with gospel choirs, wonderful organ accompaniment, and powerful preachers. But the older, more spontaneous forms of expression—raising a song by the spirit, taking it into a shout, testifying and preaching when moved by feelings—are not so easily integrated into the more formal structure of the service. There is a feeling from some of the younger people that it will be no great loss if this older level of expression dies out completely. One member of Wesley put it most succinctly when he explained, "There is a battle going on in the church now to get rid of all the old-style religion and singing. The battle is going on subconsciously. It's not going on knowingly because if it was put on the table, folk would take another look at it." It is our profound hope that people will take another look at it and make sure a place for the older expression remains. For this deepest layer of cultural tradition is marked by great complexity and beauty—the product of generations of community creativity.

178 In the 1960s the most unusual and modern in-
474 stitution on Johns Island was the Progressive Club,
(443) a successful consumers' cooperative owned and operated by some of the poorest people on the island.
(529) It contained a large grocery store and the only gym
(872) on the island and served as a center for adult edu-
(666) (p.xii-B) cation and voter registration.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mr. Esau Jenkins

SHOUTING FOR A BETTER DAY

796 533 786 Every Sunday night these people have meeting at Moving Star Hall. Every December 24th they have what we call a Christmas watch night meeting, and every December 31st, a New Year's watch. They sing from twelve o'clock until day clean.

They know the tune, they're ready to shout. They're giving praise to the great Supreme Being who have stood by them in the past days from slavery up to this present. Just to hear these songs remind us of our hardship. Those songs are the ones that made them happy, made them go through those hard days—the days when they didn't have a place to live of their own, didn't have a piece of land of their own, and were living on a plantation.

786 796 These people are hard-pressed people, and they are optimistic enough to believe that there are better days coming. When they get into these religious shouts, they feel so happy until that's all they can do but shout. The motions go into the hands and into the feet and they start clapping, and you can't keep them sitting—not when they start clapping, brother. They feel so happy 'til they got to shout. People sixty years and seventy years old clap and shout and jump all over the floor without falling down.

786 796 154 These people are trying to satisfy themselves, satisfy their soul. It's the only place they could be happy because life is so hard and sometimes there are any number of persons who do not know where the next meal is coming from. They can't talk back if they go on the farm regardless of how mean they were treated. Sometime their task they had was overburdening: Sometimes somebody watching them that they didn't have a chance even to stoop. They sometimes sad. But they're trying to get rid of it. If you could come and see them how they look when they singing and shouting, you can see they singing for a better day, shouting for a better day. And that's the thing that make them keep on shouting.

Mr. John Smalls

ANYTIME YOU COME, YOU IS IN

796 786 We don't charge nothing to come in Moving Star Hall. Moving Star Hall are free, and the door are open for each and every one. Whether you are white, whether you are dark like myself, or different color, come in. If you can preach, come on. We all preach. Don't say, no, you can't come up to this table. You can preach, pray, or testify. If you want speak, anything you want say, you got the opportunity—we give it to you.

'Cause we know we are in God hand. God made *all* of us. Don't make a few and somebody else made some; God made all. So I am happy to meet you all.

I hear the white madam say a while ago she glad we let 'em come in. "No, don't worry with that, Madam. Anytime you come, you is in. Bring friend, whatever; you's in." So sing, shout, get happy. But don't fall out!

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mr. James Mackey

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SHOUT

That's so much the most thing I could do—shout. I'll tell you, with the spirit of God, you don't care what pain you got. You forget about that when you shout. When I going out, I feel so painful I scarcely don't go. But I say to myself, just as well if I go now, 'cause will come a day when the limbs fail me.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mrs. Isabel Simmons

ALL JOIN AND MAKE THAT HALL

The only time they miss me at that hall, I either sick or off on some church duty. That hall mean a whole lot to me. It give me strength, spirit to carry on. I know everybody who comes. Some is friends, cousins, sisters; some neighbors. 796 344 346

I remember when Moving Star Hall was built, 'round about 1913, '14. Father help build the hall. Mother too. We all throw money until we gets enough to buy the land. All pay seven dollars for the lumber. All join and make that hall. They used to have prayer service in the house--only family then. Afterward, they began to have joint class from house to house. Then when we get the hall, we begin to have meeting there. 344 346

My daddy teach we how to sing, teach we how to shout, teach we how to go fast, teach we how to go slow. And then going to meeting, or later going to church, he'll teach we how to behave yourself when we get out to different place, before we leave home. 796 786 869

Used to be plenty people there--all them old people. They sing those old time spiritual, better than how we sing it now. Joe Bligen and Levy Green. Joe Deas was a good singer too, when he was much younger. Had plenty of singing womans, too. 796 553

That hall be full of people. Every Sunday. We have meeting in the neighborhood three time a week--Sunday and Tuesday and Thursday night. They keep a meeting going from eight until twelve. Then I get out, tomorrow morning I go on the farm make a day's work, too. 796

142 291 796 532 786 794

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Mr. John Smalls

EVERYBODY HAS A TURN

794 796 In the meeting, Brother Joe Deas, he are the oldest person in there, we takes him for the leading man. We put him in the front to take the text. Then take myself, I follow. Then whosoever I wanted to assist—Eli Smith or any other leader. And we go on that way. Everybody has a turn.

We have prayer service the first Sunday night in the month; and the second Sunday night let the brothers preach; then the third Sunday night we let the sisters testify; then we go right back on the fourth Sunday night the brothers will preach again. We used to had it just how it come. We feel like prayer meeting tonight, we have that. But later days, we decided we would mark it out, that every person would know where he going.

That way we trying to do it now. Brother Deas takes the text, when is preaching night, and the boys supposed to preach from that text he give you. You can go preach anywhere you want to preach, but you come right back to that same text.

(533) Any individual, soon as the man finish preach, if you wanted to raise a song, you raise it. And another way, anytime we call someone up to preach, if anybody want to sing for you, can sing you up there. Then one can sing you down. Anybody. They can't sing long as you're talking; wait 'til you finish talk.

539 796 *Mr. John Smalls*

TURN THESE BIG FISH LOOSE

Now friends, we still moving on.
I'm not going to linger with you
'Cause I want to turn these big fish loose.

Brother Deas will come and set the foundation,
The road we going to travel by,
That all of you could know the way to go.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mr. Joe Deas

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TONIGHT YOU GOT A BLESSED CHANCE

I thank you for this great privilege I have before you.
You know from last January '64, I didn't have to been here.
My face could have been under the clay.
But at this same particular hour I have a chance
To rub shoulder to shoulder with you,
I can speak language to language,
I can look face to face.
It is a great joy.

Now we started on a new task, started a new race.
From the twenty-fifth morning we been running,
We been wrastling to behold this very hour of the night.
How many haven't lived to been able to see the day?
Some gone by car,
Some pass away with fire,
Some gone by water.

All part of the world is stirred up now.
Tonight you got a blessed chance to go to the house of God.
Some want to come out tonight and can't come,
And some can come that wouldn't come.
But the day will come.
The day will come.

Mrs. Janie Hunter

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YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN YOURSELF

You can feel yourself in that hall. You have a chance to explain yourself —anybody who want to. But in church on Sunday, we just have one preacher talk. And you might get a chance to raise a song or pick out one person to make a few remarks. But to that hall, everybody could have they way, tell your own story. That's the difference it makes.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mr. John Smalls

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GOOD MORNING WARRIORS

Good morning Warriors!
How y'all feel?
I'm feeling special alive.

I just rise to tell you all my aim
And whole heart's desire.
My desire is to go the whole way.
I give thanks for being brought
Not from just last December
But from an infant birth.

I can say, "Are we yet alive
To see each other's face."
Thank God for His redeeming grace.

Since last January
Rocky was my road,
Tedious was my journey.
What troubles have I seen,
What conflicts have I passed.

If I had ten thousand tongues
It wouldn't be enough
To give thanks to Thee
Who took my feet out of the miry clay
And put them on a solid rock.

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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mr. Benjamin Bligen

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A SERMON: LET NOT THEM THAT EAT DESPISE

I'm not gonna tarry before you, Warriors. I'm glad to be here to mingle my voice among my sisters and brothers. I hope and trust that if this sermon don't do you any good, I hope it won't do you no harm.

You know you can go from one part of the Bible to the other. God say we should love one another. Let not them that eat despise them that eat not. Let us remember one another. Don't let us be like Dives now. Let us try to be just as Lazarus. Dives despised the poor. Lazarus went and ask just for a crumb that fall from the table, and before Dives had the passion on him to give, he call the dog on him. But the poor beast have compassion and lick Lazarus.

Time going pass and go on. Time come along when the poor man die. He went on home to God and been at rest. Rich man Dives die, and his home was in Hell. When he lift up his eye in Hell and saw Lazarus in Heaven, he began to memorize. He know he didn't do right, but he cries, "Oh Father, let Lazarus come and dip his finger in the water and cool my trials and trouble."

God says, "No. You had all the good times, plenty of money. You didn't need Lazarus at that time. You need him now, but it too late."

Dives say, "I got five brother. Just give me a chance that I may go back and tell them to get their heart right, that they may shun this torment place I'm in."

And He say, "No. I got Moses and I got the prophets; let them hear what they say. If they don't believe the prophets, they won't believe you, Dives."

Pray for me, Warriors. Let us sing like we singing for the last time. Let us pray like we are praying for the last time. Take no thought for tomorrow, for tomorrow the sun may shine on your grave. Jesus told us to dig deep and lay your foundation on a solid rock, that when the storm of life blow against you, you're gonna find your Father rock. If you dwell upon Him, everythin' will be all right. The world can't do you no harm.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mrs. Bertha Smith

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I DON'T KNOW HOW FAR I'M GOING

Good morning, Warriors,
I'm sitting down right now,
I feel like singing and shouting, Jesus,
But I got to be very careful.
I don't know how far in '65 I'm going,
For my heart pump me from one side to the other,
And then it hurt me from one side to the other.
I don't know when my awful day will surely come
And then my appointed hour.

I can say this new brand morning
In another January,
"Are we yet alive to see each other's face."
Oh glory, and praise Jesus,
Give us of His dying and redeeming grace.
I know from last January,
Many days have I looked up on the highway
Wondering which way I must go.
Lord, you know I thank you for this hour of
The morning,
For I know it's none of my goodness,
I know if justice had plumb the line
All my daily travels would have cut off
And then never no more return.

If I shall cut off from God
I don't want to have no gathering to do.
I want to live so that I shall pass from
Life unto death.
I don't know if I going to be in my bed,
And then I don't know if I going to be on the highway.
I know this hour of the morning
I got peace with everybody,
And then I got peace
With all my neighbors' children.
I can say this hour of the morning,
I am just what I am.

Thank you, Jesus,
I don't know how far I'm going,
Got a pain racking the body right now.
And then I got to be very careful, Jesus.
I ask you all to pray for me
So I may be able to run on.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mrs. Janie Hunter and the Moving Star Hall congregation

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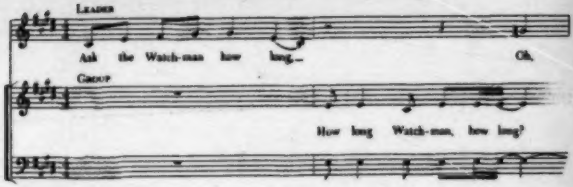
ASK THE WATCHMAN HOW LONG



Leader: Oh ask my brother how long,
Group: How long Watchman, how long?

In sixty-four how long? . . . etc.
Well, ask my daughter how long . . . etc.
Well, ask my preacher how long . . . etc.

Oh all my neighbors, how long? . . . etc.

Oh before the roll call . . . etc.
Oh just a few more risings . . . etc.
Oh ask my leader how long . . . etc.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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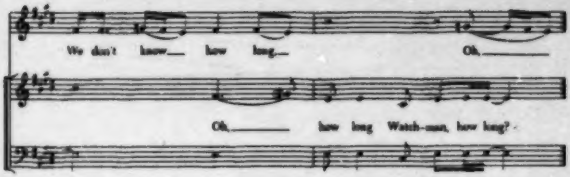

Well, all my neighbors how long? . . . etc.

Oh soon it will be over . . . etc.
Watchman, how long? . . . etc.
You know how long, how long . . . etc.
Ask my friends how long . . . etc.

Brother Jenkins, how long? . . . etc.

Oh, how long, how long,
How long Watchman, how long?
How long, how long,
How long Watchman, how long?

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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REV. JAMES CRAW

GET ON YOUR HOLY HORSE

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Be careful, my friends, because sometimes the
Chairman of Hell begin to saddle up his pony.
He gonna override somebody.
You walk down the road
And somehow your feet begin to be tangled.
The road become rocky, hard to cross.

Hallelujah, my friends,
Put on your travelin' shoes.
Get on your holy horse
Because sin are now pressing hard,
Many dangers follow.

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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mr. Benjamin Bligen

I REALIZE I'M HERE FOR SOME PURPOSE

159 794 I was about twenty-seven when I start to go to Moving Star Hall regular. Since I was a little boy, Mom used to take me there on her back—I was so small to walk in the dark, you know.

159 794 582 (869) There was a time when blues was all that was on my mind. But the truth is the light, and after getting old in age I realize that I'm here for some purpose. Father always teach me the Bible, teach us how to sing and how to pray, and tell us what must not do and what must do to inherit life everlasting. So I stop and ask myself some question. Then I just had to change from singing blues and begin to go back to what my old parents said—singing spiritual songs.

And I found out that's better.

Mr. William Saunders

THIS IS GOOD, BUT IT DOESN'T HELP YOUR EATING

159 794 796 786 (078) We all as kids went to Moving Star Hall. As far as I was concerned, I just had to be there. We used to enjoy the singing and the shouting. And at a certain period of the night, all the youngsters in there had to go up front and kneel down and everybody prayed. That place used to be full—three nights a week. You couldn't get in that place if you be late on Sunday nights. And it was so much young people. All of a sudden it just start dying off.

159 771 178 889 794 796 For one thing most of the young people started going away. Like me, I went in the Army. I was about fifteen. Once the kids start going to different places, and we start to be more enlightened, then we start getting away from this old type of thing. As we get more education, we come to find out that this wasn't the type of thing we needed to help us through the world. We needed more than this. This is good, but it doesn't help your eating. Why waste time with something that you aren't gonna get anything out of at all? You gonna be looking forward to when you die, and man, you hungry now.

That Moving Star Hall business just about died out completely. Then they started building it back up again. Now some of the people, the Moving Star Hall Singers, are enjoying some of the fruit of their labor.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mr. James Mackey

MORNING

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782

Here am I again once more, Heavenly Father,
The worm of the dust
Ready to bow this hour of the morning
On my bruised and bending knee.
Thank you, My Father, for your guardin' angel,
That guard me all night long
Until morning light appear.
And before he went from his watch,
He touch my eyes this morning with a finger of love,
And my eye become open
And behold a brand new Monday morning.
Oh, God, if you so please
Give us that holding out spirit,
That you may own us all
When we done trod across the many street of Charleston.
Oh God, what I say for our neighbors,
And the neighbors' children around in this vicinity,
Oh please, Our Father,
Make them more patient, more acknowledge,
May we love each and one another.
Help us to help each other.
And each other's cross to bear.
And Our Father, if you please,
Remember the President of this United States,
Oh, remember the officials.
And Our Father, once more I say
For the President of the N.A.A.C.P.,
Throw thy arms of protection around them,
May they achieve victory in whatever they may undertake to do.
Lead them, Our Father,
Through the unfriendly world where there's no friendly grace.
We know we must fight to increase our courage
That we may be able to endure the pain.
I ask you to please remember mankind far away,
Whatever his town may be.
Make him realize, that awful day will surely come.
And then have mercy, My Father,
When I done walk the last mile of the way,
Done all that you 'signed my hand to do,
When I shall come down off the stage of action,
Must surrender under the black banner of Death.
Ask you, Jesus, give me a resting place
Somewhere in your Kingdom
Which Job declare
The wicked cease from troubling.
Amen.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1969
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Mrs. Ruth Bligen

I LIKE TO BE ALONG WITH THE OLD PEOPLE

533 794 In church we have a lot of different choirs. But if you want to raise a song, you do that. Sometimes I'll sing. Sometimes Benji will sing. We have a good time. Our pastor is very nice. He likes singing, too. He likes singing and shouting. On Thursday nights, we have prayer meeting at the church. You express yourself and pray. It's like in the hall. The young children are not going to carry on like the old people. But I like the old people. I like to be along with the old people. And we had some wonderful times in Moving Star. I don't think the old songs will die out. We still sing it. I love the old songs. (796) (888)

Mr. William Saunders

IT'S THE PLACE WHERE PEOPLE SINK OR SWIM

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I feel I am more fortunate than most of the people who are fighting in the arena I'm fighting in because I have a way to recharge my batteries. The religious aspect of my life is pretty real to me. It gives me a lot of strength. Wesley has been my power base. It has made me feel capable of doing anything.

794 533 796 It's real to me. The singing of a person like Ruth Bligen. To hear her some Sunday morning. Her voice is purer now than it's ever been. She just gets to the place that she passes out. Just knowing what she's been through, when she sings it's not a performance. You can see Benji on a Sunday morning. He's so articulate and his Gullah becomes more profound than most people because he says it so distinctly. But to see him pray and he gets to a point where he's got to stop, and somebody's got to go and take him down because of his problems.

771 794 178 It's the place where people sink or swim. And it's the only thing they have to turn to. And yet they're always walking with their heads held high. And that's a strength that the people had on the island that I believe is dying. That strength and the proudness is not there anymore like it used to be. Sometimes you skip a generation, for whatever reason. So maybe the cycle will come back again.

But it's a base for me. It's my power source. I come back to the city, where I can go for another six days with all of the adversities that face me.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Rev. A. C. Jenkins

ANY MINISTER WHO DOESN'T TAP INTO THOSE DEEP FEELINGS WILL NOT SURVIVE HERE

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I want to bring a world view into the church—a view that includes justice and liberation in Latin America and in South Africa. My challenge is to make it real to the people on Johns Island, and if it is real for them, they want to shout about it. The way I can touch those feelings is to end my sermon with the words to one of the old songs.

Any minister who doesn't tap into those deep feelings will not survive here. The people will go elsewhere. I love serving on Johns Island. Before I was here I was at an elite church in Charleston. Amens were few due to a different worship experience.

Mr. Gerald Mackey

I TAKE MY TAPE RECORDER TO CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY

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I enjoy the older people. I'm always around them, and I talk with them often. I enjoy the singing. In fact I take my tape recorder to church every Sunday, hoping for one of the old spirituals raised from the floor. Then I play them all through the week on my stereo here or in my car. It's very uplifting. I don't miss any opportunity I get to hear the older people sing. To me, that's pride. I really enjoy listening to them and I think it's great that they have managed to preserve that aspect of our history.

I'm afraid that eventually after all these people are gone that the younger people will not feel as comfortable carrying on. I wish it wouldn't happen, though.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Mrs. Alice Wine

A LOT OF PEOPLE MISS IT

344 We don't have class meeting in the hall anymore. I miss it. We don't have
346 it now because all these young preachers have everything to the church.
796 What are a few people going to do in a big old church like that? If the people
178 turn out, it never be too large. I like to go to the hall cause you can have your way. You can exercise better. You can feel yourself. You can do the same thing in the church, but the church so big.

178 We used to have watch meeting on Christmas night. We turn out in the
796 hall and be there until sunrise. On New Year's, people go all night and be there til New Year roll in. We pray and sing until New Year roll in, then they go to preaching. And about five or six o'clock, then the ladies take over to testify. You don't find that now. Some people can't even say their prayers.

A lot of people miss it. These people is too funny. I can't figure how people could change so fast. Everybody go down to the church. They have watch meeting there, but they don't go but half the night. The hall go until day broad clean. Sometime people shout there until eight or nine o'clock in the morning. We have crowd from all different place—Wadmalaw and Mt. Pleasant and James Island. Ooh man, that hall is packed.

484 It's too dangerous now to walk to the hall at night. You don't find nobody
674 walking this road no more. It's not the cars only, people do wicked. People
178 will kill you and knock you down and do all kind of thing with you, no, no. When you see my door shut, it's shut. I don't come out.

The people don't have no old songs now, the people have new songs. And
178 I don't know one of them. When they start to sing, I just shut my mouth.
533 Nothing but new songs now. Ain't got a taste to it. Ain't got a spirit in it. But when the old people used to start to sing those old songs, and it's time to go to church, man, you run.

512 505 (574) neighbor in the hospital of a nearby town. Young men sometimes go across the water again for recreation in town. Young women usually cannot drive either a boat or a car and are dependent upon some male family member for transportation if they wish to go into town for similar reasons. Electricity 365 came to the island in 1964 and changed the habits of the islanders considerably. Today television provides a major 207 517 source of recreation for most families in the evenings. Children of ten and eleven watch it many hours in the afternoons and evenings. 206 Telephones have been available since 1972. Some children engage in frequent and lengthy conversations with their mainland friends after school. A new boat 504 landing is scheduled for completion in 1977, which will be 505 large enough to accommodate a ferry. With its completion, reliance on small motor boats will be phased out and mainlanders will have easier access to the island. When the ferry becomes operational, it is probable that the community will become much less of a closed community in important ways.

512 Weekends are reserved for the major social activities of the community. Saturdays are devoted to shopping for (438) (574) major supplies in town, or for entertaining mainland visitors and relatives. The major social event of the week is the 512 Sunday morning church service. Most islanders walk two or • 796 three miles to the major church at the center of the island. (493) A few families keep four-wheeled vehicles on the island, and 491 older residents ride in these. Roads on the island are sandy

491 one-lane affairs, which pass through woods of oak and pine
and marshes filled with cat tails. The church itself is an
346 impressive structure, built by the cooperative labor of the
461 men many years ago, each of whom hauled an allotment of con-
476 crete blocks from the boat landing in ox carts over the
493 deeply rutted sand roads. It was built in a location equally
368 distant from the "four corners" which were populated at that
time, and faces due east. Preceding the major morning ser-
794 mon, three Sunday-school classes are held simultaneously in
the church sanctuary, with oral reading and discussion of a
printed lesson a major component of the lessons for all age
• 796 groups. Formal preaching is held one Sunday each month, with
[793] morning and evening services conducted by a well-educated
[794] minister who comes from Georgetown. On other Sundays, ser-
vices are conducted by church members. The most prestigious
794 social group on the island is that of the Board of Deacons
511 of the church; this small group of six or seven of the oldest
men conducts the major business of the island. Other busi-
575 ness is conducted by two women's clubs or "lodges," which
often meet on Sunday afternoons in the abandoned schoolhouse.
Other social activities are parties, adult education classes,
music and dancing, and story telling. Community parties
527 are sometimes held in the old school building, and adult
873 education classes have been conducted there as well. Music
533 is a highly valued activity in every age group, as evidenced
535 both by the singing for Sunday services and by the dancing

533 enjoyed at parties. Congregational singing in church is
535 often accompanied by dance movements and clapping, particu-
[196] larly on the part of older women. Story telling is also a
538 highly valued activity, with males of all ages being especi-
888 ally skilled at this art. With old age, the obligation to
538 remember and relate oral history of importance to the family
or the social group is placed upon both males and females.
Young people spend many hours with old people, listening to
these historical accounts and to the stories of ghosts and
spirits which abound in the area.

621 The closed community of the island can be usefully
compared to more open black communities on the nearby main-
land. Three different island residents expressed spontane-
ously, at different times, their appreciation for living in
a community where "nobody bothered you." The closed nature
of the community makes for less interference from the domi-
nant whites. Land ownership and a relatively long history
464 of independent conduct of their daily affairs on the island
484 has made for self confidence and willingness to try new jobs
[157] and live in unknown cities at least for short periods of
[166] time. Islanders frequently live and work off the island
during their middle years, returning to live on the land
owned by their families in their old age or when their aging
parents need their help. Geographic isolation has also meant
limited job choices, however. None who engaged in business
or professional occupations have been able to remain on the

000 -13% of its residents.

SEA ISLAND RELIGION

795 794 The most dominant institution in Sea Island society is the church. There are numerous churches on each island. These churches are Protestant in denomination and are about equally divided among Methodist and Baptist congregations. These congregations may have as few as forty or as many as two hundred members. Each congregation supports the operational expenses and contributes to the maintenance of the church facility. Ordinarily this facility is a large one room, single floor, cinder block building. The size and renovation are generally determined by the financial resources of the congregation. In some cases, along with renovation the church has been enlarged by one or two rooms.

794 796 Until the late 1950's each congregation tried with all effort to have its own Pastor, but this became increasingly difficult, so today, even the larger membered congregations have reduced their Sunday services to a bi-monthly schedule. The Sunday gathering is really the time of the community's elders. The entire day revolves around church attendance and relaxing in the Spirit of the Lord. Sunday services generally start for the congregation at 11:00 A.M. and concludes near 2:30 P.M. Afterwards there may be elder meetings or evening prayer attended primarily by the senior congregation members. The nature of the Sea Island religions 796

•796 services as depicted in the literature is still rather accurate and need not be entertained here, except to say that the general patternings of the services and demonstrations of faith via "shouting" has remained as a center of church services.

The Church Structure

794 (793) The Pastor is the head of each church. There may or may not be a pastor "in training" to assist as needed. Under the Pastor is the Elder Council of Deacons. This body is comprised of the oldest male members of the congregation. The Deacons Council, through a committee structure, [illegible] the affairs of the church. Next in the structure are the [illegible] Mothers, followed by the general congregations. Aside from their committee responsibilities, the Elder Deacons take part in Sunday services. An extremely learned body, the Elders are easily as able in the scriptures as the Pastors. Their learned abilities and oratorical skills are particularly evident during Funeral services. In these services, the Deacons take turns recalling through their eyes the life of the deceased person. Their eulogies delivered by these Soul stirring orators are the highlighted feature of the rites.

The Practice of the Sea Island Religion

771 554 The islander does not simply outgrow religion. On the

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342 Another custom, more widespread than is generally known, probably originated
799 in Africa. When a new building is completed it is christened with prayer and song,
982 followed by shouting. The afternoon Joe and Clarence finished the Cabin, (Illustra-
[178] tion 12). Clarence made a prayer and asked a blessing, Julia put rice in the four
[711] corners for good luck, and after a few songs it was considered that the building was auspiciously launched.

342 The addition to the original Cabin was *not* blessed. It is a curious fact that the roof developed leaks at once, termites got into the floor, and it was necessary to rebuild the whole section. If such bad luck continues, it will look as though the Sapelo idea is not far wrong. There, it is considered most unwise to put on an addition to an old house. "You will lose some member of your family if you do."

353 In the papering of the Cabin, on my own initiative, I took another precaution
[123] which has afforded the singers much amusement. The walls of many small cabins
[754] are covered with news-print, because the prevailing idea in the old days was that a hag had to read every word before she could work evil on you.[39] I used the financial section of *The New York Times* for good measure. In the accompanying illustration
[533] (Illustration 14), it can be seen how this original type of wallpaper enhances the picture made by the singers, and separates them from their background. It was made during the closing song—"One a These Days, My Sister"—when Willis was shaking the hand of Bessie in accordance with the usual custom at prayer meeting in a less sophisticated era.

000 DeZayas, in *African Negro Art*, tells of an exceedingly sensitive devil at Sierra Leone, who requires the utmost respect, and, if not propitiated by liberal offerings of palm wine, rice, and fowl, will certainly bring trouble to those invoking his intervention. Every time he is consulted, rice flour must first be offered. However, our
342 Negroes disclaim any knowledge of their reason for using rice at a housewarming,
[711] except to bring good luck.

787 Chance often enables us to discover new examples of the general belief in oc-
763 cult forces. Such was the case when a friend and I heard a cracking report in my empty kitchen. On investigation we found that a glass bowl had broken in half. The next day Julia told me it is a sure sign that some member of your family is going

[171] [39] A similar notion is held in Nassau according to M. Cavel in "Items of Folk-Lore from Bahama Negroes," in Vol. 17 of the Journal of American Folk-Lore. "If you think you are being hagged, take a pint of benne seed . . . and guinea corn . . . spill it all in the four corners of your house; that will catch the hag as she cannot leave the house before she has picked up all the seeds, one by one, during the night."

A, [For Illustration 12, see Category 342, plate facing p. 80--Analyst]
B, [For Illustration 14, see Category 353, plate facing p. 96--Analyst]

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567 that was distinctive. He taught his wife Milly (Illustration 34)[A] how to make "goof
754 bags." Apparently his magic was no more potent than Gullah Jack's when it came
(556) to protecting himself. Gullah Jack was executed in Charleston for his part in the
(682) uprising of 1822; and when Jim Polecat was old, decrepit, and a nuisance, his own
(888) children pushed him into the fireplace, and burned him to ashes. Milly must have
159 been a peculiar character. She would turn her back on you when she had anything
342 to say. When her cabin was built she insisted on having no windows—a good Afri-
754 can mode of construction. She said: "Door's enough to watch." When urged to have them for ventilation, she insisted that "Chimney gives enough air." There were no windows put in. The walls of her cabin were lined with boxes and trunks that had belonged to her children, all of whom were dead or in the penitentiary. It is no wonder she was moody, and that the other Negroes were afraid of her. They might well be, for—in addition to being looked upon as a witch—she was the mother of seven murderers.

231 In every Negro settlement there are usually frizzled chickens.[31] These curious-
825 looking birds are supposed to be on the watch for goof bags or any "sleight-o'-hand"
754 buried under doorsteps. Josephine tells me that she always keeps one around for such a purpose. If the chicken "come clean" (loses its feathers), it is a sure proof that it has scratched up something intended for its owner's bad luck. So much for black magic. You hear little about it, but the belief in its efficacy turns up every now and then when least expected.

793 At the risk of being tiresome, it may be well to call attention to various obscure
751 customs among the Negroes that could easily be passed over as idiosyncrasies. From
•796 the pulpit of the Jewtown African Baptist Church I heard Parson Joe Lowman say with a weak voice that he was feelin' very po'ly and in no condition to preach a Christmas sermon, but by the grace of God he would do his best. I was astonished to find, as he warmed to his subject, "The Christ Child and the Three Wise Men," that his voice grew stronger and stronger. When his sermon was finished, I realized that I would never hear a better one, and that he had either received supernatural
000 aid or was a consummate artist—perhaps both. Later, I read an article by Morton C. Kahn, on "Adventures in Medical Research among Two Strange Tribes of Dutch Guiana,"[32] in which the author described the greeting employed by the Bush Negroes, the translation of which runs somewhat as follows: "Howdy, white man.

[31] *Captain R. S. Rattray tells us such freakish birds are called asense chickens in Ashanti.*
[32] "Where Black Man Meets Red," Natural History, May, 1936.

A. [For Illustration 34, see Category 754, plate facing p. 225--Analyst]

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How are you, brother?" The reply is: "So-so, Granman. How are you, brother?" The writer explains that "It does not do to claim that one is feeling too well, otherwise the enmity of the spirits might be incurred." From this it can be seen why there was a wide divergence between Lowman's words and his performance, and also why our older Negroes always appear to enjoy poor health.

Another tradition caused me to be embarrassed for the poor preacher, who seemed to have a strange affliction. I furtively looked around to see how the younger members of the congregation were taking the curious performance. Their matter-of-course attitude should have made me less innocent. However, it was not until I heard other preachers give the same effect—the mewing of a harassed cat combined with the bark of a half-strangled dog—that I realized my ludicrous mistake. At the peak of the preacher's harangue the words pour out so fast that he has no time to get his breath, and his gasping efforts cause the outrageous sounds that appear to have no name with us, but which are described by Martha Beckwith, in *Black Roadways*, under the name of "trooping." [33] She believes that the exercise "if persisted in, will produce that semiconscious condition so favorable to the communication of spirits." But it has always seemed to me that religious ecstasy is itself the source of the strange manifestation. When the preacher has reached his rhythmical best; when an insistent tapping of toes on the floor provides an under-current of sound along with a feeling of uncanny suspense; when the "moaning" (as the peculiarly beautiful humming of the Negroes is called) takes on an elemental quality that comes from everywhere and from nowhere in particular—then the snapping point is reached for someone, and you hear a piercing shriek. A woman stands up with stark, stiff arms stretched high above her head. If she makes much of a commotion she is supported into the open air to recover. When I was a little child I saw a woman who had gone into this rigid state carried to a pump beside the church, where, under the spout, she was quickly brought to her senses. In the House of Prayer in Savannah (where the pillars are thickly padded, and the sawdust is inches deep on the floor) I saw a "lone shouter" fall into a trance that lasted half

[33] *It is possible that the tradition was carried to Jamaica by Elder George Lisle, the former slave of Mr. Sharp, a loyalist of Savannah, who gave him his liberty. Lisle preached in Georgia during the Revolution. At the close of the war he went to Jamaica. Though an ex-slave, he organized, in Kingston in 1784, the first Baptist church on the island, and became "the chief human factor in the salvation of Jamaica."* (L. G. Jordan, Negro Baptist History in the United States.)

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an hour. She was covered with a coat and left where she fell until she returned to consciousness.

In *African Majesty* Egerton speaks of the same hands-off treatment, saying: "When persons not given to such behavior fall down in a fit, they are left where they fall, and no one touches them." It is a very easy matter for a Negro—even in this country—to become possessed. I have seen this phenomenon happen too many times among our Georgia Negroes to believe that the Negro patterned his behavior after that of white fanatics.[34] The chances are that the whites copied the blacks, since it is a matter of record that both races attended the same revivals. It is also possible that the whites took over the African song-form, and the system of punctuating the sermon with responses like the Negroes' "Tell 'im!" "Preach the Word!" "Go on!" and "Amen!" I heard a Negro preacher say to an unresponsive congregation: "You gotta help me. You needn't think you can sit back there an' do nothin'." From then on, he held their attention, and received the emotional support that is required to become a successful evangelist. This form of encouragement evidently came out of Africa, for Captain Canot, in his *Adventures of an African Slaver*, tells us that "It is the custom in African palavers to give token of assent by a sigh, a groan, a slight exclamation, or shout, when anything affecting, agreeable, or touching is uttered by a speaker."

Where the "holy laugh" came from I am unable to say, but it is clearly of a piece with the unusual observances already mentioned. I had read about it, but heard it employed on several occasions before I recognized the mirthless staccato "ha-ha" for what it was. It is unobtrusively introduced to carry on a rhythmical phrase, in much the same way as the enclitical *a* helps to fill any gap which may interfere with the undulating flow of a song.

There is far more of tradition connected with the religious observances of the Negroes than appears on the surface. The custom of sending messages by the dying to those who have gone before, moaning, singing, and "hollerin' " while "settin' up" with the dead, holding elaborate funerals, preaching the funeral sermon when it suits the convenience of the pastor—anywhere from one to three months after the "buryin' "—each one has its counterpart in Africa. Egerton, who stayed in one

[34] Melville J. Herskovits says in his Handbook of Social Psychology: "The religious hysteria that marks the manner of worship by certain white groups in the United States is so different from the kind of evangelical excitation found in Europe that it can be referred only to influences—in some cases, indeed, two or three times removed—which emanated from Negro religious gatherings."

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spot long enough to find out many fascinating things about Africa's black residents, mentions the fact that "In the cold wet months it is inconvenient to have . . . a [funeral] feast, and if some one dies at that time of year, the feast is often postponed until the dry season."

Negro preachers—particularly those who possess good voices and a store of spicy proverbs—often deliver sermons and offer prayers that stick in the mind. One I heard in Liberty County (the one whom I thought afflicted) expatiated on the subject of sin. He made it clear that certain types were worse than others. "Sin is a mean thing," and his tone was scornful; but when he said: "Self is a terrible thing!" it was thunderous and convincing. In a barn of a church in Camden County the substance of the preacher's prayer was in these touchingly earnest words: "We're down here, Lord, chewin' on dry bones an' swallerin' bitter pills. We can't do nothin' without You." Whatever may be said about the emotional character of the religion of our American Negro, it must be conceded that his sins are of the flesh rather than the spirit. He is generous with his last crust, and there would be no need of orphanages if white people, in proportion to their means, adopted as many children as colored people.

When it comes to terse economy of speech we are obliged to concede that no one can equal the Negro. Mrs. Annie Arnold, born on St. Simon's in 1844, gave me the perfect example of this fact in recounting a bit of local history. A cargo of slaves of the Ebo tribe had been landed at a suspiciously secluded spot on the west side of the island. They preferred death to a life of captivity, and as they walked into the water the leader said: "The water brought us here. The water will take us away." No one but an African could have expressed such poignant unhappiness in so few words. In view of the fact known to traders that the Ebo men made poor slaves and were prone to suicide,[33] the account is probably true. The Negroes believe the story, and to this day they have to be extremely hungry to fish by themselves at Ebo Landing. One night a few years ago some colored boys braved tradition, and went 'possum hunting in the neighborhood. I have my own ideas as to the real cause of their terrifying experience, but the fact remains that no others have been tempted to repeat it.

Sir Charles Lyell tells us that "The slave trade ceased in 1796, and but few negroes were smuggled into Georgia from foreign countries, except indirectly for

[33] *For this reason as few as possible were accepted by the traders.*

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During ante-bellum days shouting was as much a part of the Sunday afternoon service as the sermon. By 1900, however, the more fashionable Negro preachers felt that this mode of worship could not be correct, since it did not conform to the conventional pattern of the white man's service; they began to frown upon the religious dance as they did upon the use of "Amen" and similar responses by the congregation. Even so, the hold of shouting is tenacious, and it is practiced during the Christmas holidays[2] to this day. All the country Negroes enjoy it immensely, though many are unwilling to admit that they know how to do it, as they consider the dance old-fashioned. It was years before I was permitted to see the St. Simon's Negroes indulge in this innocent performance. Why they should have been so secretive about such a pastime I cannot understand, unless—because the style of dancing is unlike ours—they were afraid I might laugh at it.

I shall never forget the night at the hall of the Queen of the South Society when I first saw the ring-shout. Hard board benches were an unimportant matter. Little had I suspected, when Margaret took care of my room at the Arnold House years before, that she could outdo the Ouled Nail Dancers, of Biskra—if she wished. As it was, she wiggled her hips shamelessly, held her shoulders stiff—at the same time thrusting them forward—kept her feet flat on the floor, and, with the usual rhythmic heel-tapping, progressed with real style around the circle—goodness knows how. White folks who attempt the step of the true ring-shout find it difficult exercise. Few young Negroes will do it, and the Big Apple, with the stamp of the white man's approval, has recently been more popular. Should shouting ever achieve the same vogue, its life would be prolonged.

It was good fun telling the St. Simon's Negroes—too self-conscious in earlier years to shout—how a professional performer, Tamiris, seen in New York was dancing spirituals. There is a wide gulf between such a professional and Cornelia, but I am certain that the white artist, no matter how skillful, could learn something in the way of form from this colored woman, whose lean fine frame, beaked nose, and keen eyes bespeak her Arab ancestry—on the male side. As for Edith—who, being a Murphy, is temperamental—every now and then she gives a stylized, angular performance as though copying the poses of the figures in Egyptian decorations. The way she holds her arms and hands is perfect. It positively hurts that I have no moving picture of her statuesque, rhythmic pauses, or the pause Gertrude (Illustration

[2] Joe Armstrong tells me that before the War Between the States, "Jubilee time began on Monday before Christmas with a big eat of pork and baked yams."

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535 27) makes with head and shoulders bowed slightly forward, arms held close to her body, elbows bent at right angles, forearms thrust out before her, and palms upturned in a supplicating gesture. White musicians and dancers have obtained much from these untutored people, who appear to have an inborn gift for rhythm in its many manifestations. Work or play, preaching, praying, music, sculpture, or dancing—all are one to them when it comes to rhythmic expression.

HA'K 'E ANGELS

567 Deacon Eddy Thorpe, of McIntosh County, who contributed this Watch Night shout, explained that the slaves, when allowed to go to a praise-house that was out of bounds, were given passes with their promise to return before sun-up. On New Year's Eve the service consisted of prayers, religious songs, and a sermon by the preacher. At midnight, different members offered thanks to the Good Lord for the blessings of the past twelve months and implored His aid for the year to come. The shouting then began, and continued until dawn. This shout, which varies little in content or rhythm in Glynn, Liberty, McIntosh, and Camden counties,[3] was the last to be sung as the watcher, appointed for that duty, announced: "Day's a-comin'":

(782)

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(539)

Day, day Oh—see day's a-comin'
Ha'k 'e angels
Day, day Oh—see day's a-comin'
Ha'k 'e angels

[3] In the vicinity of Albany, Georgia, there is a similar version that uses "Yonder Come Day" instead of "Ha'k 'e Angels."

A. [For Illustration 27, see Category 142, plate facing p. 181--Analysis]

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UNTIL I DIE

796 I am told that this shout was once a favorite at "foreday meetin'," held on Sunday in the neighborhood of five o'clock.

Laura considered it her duty to ring the bell, and get the other members out to church. Since her death, however, nobody has felt the urge to take her place, and on St. Simon's the early service has lapsed:

[533]
[534]

I'm goin' tuh set in the humble chair
Coin' tuh rock from side tuh side
Coin' tuh rock from side tuh side
Un-til I die.

Chorus: Un-til I die (leader)
Un-til I die (basers)
Un-til I die (leader)
Un-til I die (basers)
I'm goin' tuh rock from side tuh side 'til I die.
(Repeated several times)

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KNEE-BONE

533 [461] [501] Fanny Kemble, in her *Journal*, describes some shout songs—also used for rowing, through a suitable change of rhythm—in the following words:

> I told you formerly that I thought I could trace distinctly some popular national melody with which I was familiar in almost all their songs; but I have been quite at a loss to discover any such foundation for many that I have heard lately and which have appeared to me extraordinarily wild and unaccountable. The way in which the chorus strikes in with the burden, between each phrase of the melody, chanted by a single voice, is very curious and effective, especially with the rhythm of the rowlocks for accompaniment.

But if Fanny Kemble had visited Africa and heard a few of the native songs (such as can now be purchased in gramophone shops specializing in foreign records), she would not have been puzzled by those sung by her husband's slaves.

What was said in 1839 concerning these "unaccountable" songs applies equally well to the songs given in this Chapter. And they are sung today, much as they were then, by descendants of the singers Fanny Kemble mentions. Side by side with these semi-chants you hear songs which show clearly the white man's musical influence. The oldest Negroes say that they shouted after church Sunday afternoons and after prayer meeting at night. Before the shouting began, they sang spirituals and "lined out" hymns. The chances are that all three types were sung from the time the white man concerned himself with the religious instruction of his slaves. In Liberty County the members of the Midway community countenanced a revival in 1838, which lasted two years and was continued by the whites until 1842.

[177] [196]

In the shout song, Knee-Bone, curious twists and exotic tones are employed—including the musical, yet nasal "ha-nnn"—that must be heard to be appreciated. None of our musical symbols is capable of suggesting the strange turns used in this, as well as others of the more primitive Afro-American chants. If records are not made soon, the elusive beauty which characterizes this type of singing will be irretrievably lost.

The shouter, in this musical chant, obeys instructions and bends the knee far down with the rhythm of the words "Bend my knee-bone to the ground." The rowing version calls for "knee-bone bend to the elbow bend." "Aye Lord" is often substituted for "Ha-nnn Lord."

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MY SOUL ROCK ON JUBILEE

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•796
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This song was sung and shouted after prayer meeting and after church service—usually when the church "got a soul":

Chorus: 'N Jubilee—'N Jubilee
A-a-a-h my Lord![13]
'N Jubilee—'N Jubilee
My soul rock on Jubilee!

Long time talkin' 'bout Jubilee
A-a-a-h my Lord!
Long time talkin' 'bout Jubilee
My soul rock on Jubilee!
My mother done gone to Jubilee
A-a-a-h my Lord!
My mother done gone to Jubilee
My soul rock on Jubilee!
I got a right in Jubilee
A-a-a-h my Lord!
I got a right in Jubilee
My soul rock on Jubilee!

Repeat Chorus:

In reference to the following version, Clara said: "When it gets hot, them that's on the outside of the church comes runnin' in." I asked what she meant by "getting hot." "O, you feel good. You know things is warmin' up and you gets revived":

I come t' tell you 'bout Jubilee
O-o-o-h my Lord!
Come t' shout that Jubilee
My soul rock on Jubilee!
That Jud! That Jud! That Jubilee[14]
O-o-o-h my Lord!
That Jud! That Jud! That Jubilee
My soul rock on Jubilee!

[13] A wild quavering cry given by the "high tribble"—far above the other singers—makes your "hair riz," as the Negroes say.
[14] Faster, with double rap on "That Jud! That Jud!"

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121 other denominations, I make no attempt to go into a description of usual church
(538) observances. My particular concern has been the preservation of the religious slave
songs. Those of the Baptist Negroes—the most conservative sect on the Coast of
Georgia—give greater evidence than the others of an African background. Coupled
as they are with the most picturesque customs, they have come in for special consid-
eration.

533 Although certain songs are peculiarly appropriate to such occasions as Easter
and Communion, they cannot be rigidly classified according to the services which
may have inspired them.[1] They were sung at any time, anywhere. The majority of
(128) them appear equally suited to church, prayer, and covenant meeting. However, the
ceremonies connected with baptism, "settin'-up" with the dead, and burial mean so
much to the Negro that a separate section of this Chapter is devoted to each of
(171) them. They appear to be connected with customs prevailing a century ago in the
section of Africa from which the slaves were obtained. The significance attached to
795 baptism in a river, or immersion on the outgoing tide, may tie up with the initiation
171 rites connected with the river-worship of Dahomey; and anyone who reads what
explorers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have to say about the Africans'
761 concern with death will recognize that our Negroes display the same trait.

CHURCH, PRAYER, AND COVENANT MEETING

794 Patty Gardner[2] used to open the "South End" prayer meeting, held at Deacon
796 Merchant's house, by singing the following song. As the other members joined in,
533 they shook hands ceremoniously with their neighbors assembled in a circle.[3] The
younger generation knew nothing of this custom until I had Old Quarterman come
to the Cabin and "show them the way."

(152) [1] Some may have come into existence while the slaves were at work—others were undoubt-
(782) edly conceived under stress of religious emotion. In the old days a deacon, at the peak of his
rhythmically chanted prayer, broke into song, in which those present joined. After a verse or
two, he continued the prayer, ending his plea for mercy by singing with the others some
appropriate slave hymn. It is unfortunate that this highly effective method of rousing the con-
gregation should have lapsed in most churches. Now, the impassioned exhortation ends with
a sudden drop into an ordinary conversational tone—like a dash of cold water in the face.

(787) [2] Patty, while singing a religious song at work, would go into a trance-like state. Clarence
told me he remembered seeing her moving rhythmically in a circle around her cabin, a dish
towel in one hand and a discarded tin can (highly prized in those days) in the other. She tried
the can over and over, totally oblivious of time or surroundings.

[3] This procedure is mentioned by Sir Charles Lyell in his Second Visit to the United States.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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533 •796 At one of our singing festivals, Liverpool, who was well over a hundred at the time, became excited as he heard again the old prayer-meeting song, left his seat, joined in the swaying group of sixty-five singers, and gave a demonstration of the "right hand of fellowship" which he performed with the dignity seen in the minuet. First he gave his right hand to the singer on his right; then, bowing sedately, he crossed his left hand over to the same member. Both hands were then shaken as the singers bowed with the rhythim before passing to the next neighbor and repeating the same ceremony.

(539)

'Tis well an' good I come here tonight
come here tonight
come here tonight
Well an' good I come here tonight
For to do my Master's will.
O Brother Quarterman show me the way
show me the way
show me the way
O my brother show me the way—
The way to the Promised Land.

(794) At old-time prayer meetings the following song brought out all of the members—one at a time—on the floor, breaking up any tendency to stiffness. Each rose as his or her name was called and moved around the circle, returning to the group when another member's name was about to be called.

This same song was called an "ant'em" on Eleuthera, (one of the Bahamas). When I asked the singer if it was old, she said: "Methuselum sung 'um." 533 539

Oh mh Jesus bin yer
O He bin yer
Jesus bless my soul an' gone.
Jesus bin yer
O He bin yer
Jesus bless my soul an' gone.
Sister Bessie where were you
My sister where were you
My sister where were you
When the Lord was passin' by.

(Illustration 16) A

A. [For Illustration 16, see Category 142, plate facing p. 97--Analyst]

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"Covenant meetin'," now called "Pure Mind Meetin'," was formerly held at the last prayer meeting before Communion Sunday, and was of service in keeping track of the members and making sure, from their own words, that they were "livin' in union." No more meetings of this character have been held at the "South End" of St. Simon's since Betty Brown paid the penalty of false testimony. She got up and told the members: "I'm at peace with everybody." Then, as she was leaving the church, she said: "I'm goin' home t' put Josie [her crippled grandson] out the house." She walked to the step, fell, and never reached home alive.

BELIEVER I KNOW

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(533)
(291)
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This song, sung on Sapelo by Katie Brown, while sitting under her tall magnolia tree, reflects the peace of her surroundings. Although she was born about 1850, her voice is remarkably true and sweet. She tells me that the record book of the Spalding Plantation has her age as ten years when the War Between the States began, but she believes she was two years older, for she wore a shift [4] at the time her family left Sapelo and "went to the Main" for refuge on the Stephens Plantation in Bryan County. In December, after the "Big War" was over, they walked to Savannah. There Katie's mother, Cotty Grovenor, petitioned the Freedman's Bureau to let her return to Sapelo. "March was comin' and time to plant." She remembers distinctly how sore and swollen her feet were from walking. Cotty had to soak them in warm water each night.

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I know, I know Lord
  Believer I know
I know, I know Lord
  Believer I know
I know the road so thorny
  Believer I know
I know the road is thorny
  Believer I know

[4] *The slaves count their age by some such event. Katie seemed to be proud of the fact she was old enough to wear a shift. Shad Hall must be younger, for he still wore a "binyan" (apparently an African word), which was the kind of shirt worn by young boys before they wore pants. With a grin, he told me their first pants had no pockets so that it would be less easy for them to steal eggs.*

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MY GOD IS A ROCK IN A WEARY LAND

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This song belongs to the exhorting-sermon type which has an African counterpart. The old-time preacher rhythmically chanted his sermon; at effective intervals he broke into song, in which he was joined by the congregation.

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Chorus: My God is a rock in a weary land
weary land
in a weary land
My God is a rock in a weary land
Shelter in a time of storm.

Ah know He is a rock in a weary land
weary land
in a weary land
Ah know He is a rock in a weary land
Shelter in a time of storm.

Stop let me tell you 'bout the Chapter One
When the Lord God's work has jus' begun
Stop and let me tell you 'bout the Chapter Two
When the Lord God's written his Bible through
Stop and let me tell you 'bout the Chapter Three
When the Lord God died on Calvary.

Chorus: An' Ah know He is a rock in a weary land
weary land
in a weary land
Ah know He is a rock in a weary land
Shelter in a time of storm.

Stop and let me tell you 'bout the Chapter Four
Lord God visit 'mong the po'
Stop and let me tell you 'bout the Chapter Five
Lord God brought the dead alive
Stop and let me tell you 'bout the Chapter Six
He went in Jerusalem and healed the sick.

(repeat chorus)

Stop and let me tell you 'bout Chapter Seven
Died and risen and went to Heaven
Stop and let me tell you 'bout the Chapter Eight
John seen Him standin' at the Golden Gate
Stop and let me tell you 'bout the Chapter Nine
Lord God turned the water to wine
Stop and let me tell you 'bout the Chapter Ten
John says He's comin' in the world again.

(repeat chorus)

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Lord called Jonah t' Nineveh Lan'
To preach the gospel in de terrible d'man'
Jonah risen an' 'e went on down de Joppa two years started over
yonda to Tarsha two years to wait 'pon God's comman'
Got on the ship went down to de lowermos' deck
The cap'n of de ship started to sail
Got in de midst o' de middle o' de deep
The cap'n of de ship got de trouble in min'
Search the ship from bow t' stern
The' foun' ole Jonah fast asleep
Wake up . . .

The last two lines, which ended with "tell you now," I could not get. These were followed by the chorus. Further vicisitudes of Jonah were related in two more long verses.

AN' HE NEVER SAID A MUMBLIN' WORD

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Last Easter I attended service, by special request, at a makeshift Baptist "tabernacle" far from the highway, in the pine wilderness of Camden County. There was a roof over a part of the one-story shack, but it lacked sides except behind the pulpit. The benches were planks on blocks of wood, and pine slabs were put on the swampy ground to keep our feet dry. In his sermon the minister pointedly stressed the fact that spiritual comfort was infinitely to be preferred over that of the flesh. His earnestness and conviction in describing Christ's appearance before Pilate, and the fortitude with which He bore His sufferings, made the scene too vivid for Phyllis, who became excited, jumped from her seat, and shrieked: "He didn't do nothin'! No He didn't! He was an innocent man! Yes He was!" She was in truth a modern witness for my Lord.

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See how they done my Lord
done my Lord
done my Lord
See how they done my Lord
An' He never said a mumblin' word.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
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Colored Persons was published in Savannah in 1837. These are only two of many such works published in the South. 567 797

The Missionary Society of the South Carolina Conference of the Methodist denomination collected for their missions to the Negroes between twelve and fifteen hundred dollars in 1837 and in 1840 reported nineteen missionaries, thirteen missions, 232 plantations administered unto, 5,482 members, and 3,811 children.[48] Very little data can be obtained concerning the activities of the Baptist denomination among the sea-island Negroes, although it is known that more of them adhered to the Baptist faith than to any other. In the summer of 1838 a revival of religion commenced among the Negroes of Liberty County, Georgia, and spread throughout the entire coastal region of South Carolina and Georgia, continuing for two years. During that time the Congregational Church in Liberty County and the Baptist churches throughout the region greatly added to their colored membership.[49]

In addition to the space reserved for slaves in the rear and in the gallery of "Brick Church" on St. Helena Island, practically every plantation had its own "praise house" where the people held their weekly services. In case the planter provided no separate building, services were held in the cabin of the religious leader. Miss Towne wrote to a friend shortly after she reached St. Helena Island in 1862 that the praise house was "always the cabin of the oldest person in the village of negro houses."[50] She was 567 796 346 567 346

[48] Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes in the United States*, pp. 82, 83.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[50] *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne*, p. 20.

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567 doubtless speaking from a knowledge only of the planta-
346 tion where she was then residing, for her co-workers have left descriptions of various praise houses on the Island. W. C. Gannett wrote in April, 1862, that the praise house on Pine Grove plantation was "quite a nice little house,—the best on this part of the island."[81] The praise house of Eustis plantation on Ladies Island which their mistress, then living in Massachusetts, had built them was a church indeed.[82]

567 Once, twice, or even three times a week, those who
794 were religiously inclined met at the praise house to sing,
796 pray, and exhort. Edward L. Pierce estimated that about half of the adult Negroes on St. Helena were members
533 of a church.[83] The praise meeting usually opened with a "sperichil" followed by a hymn which the leader "deaconed out" two lines at a time, reading from a well-worn psalm book, if perchance he had learned to read, pretending to read, nevertheless, holding the book nearer the flickering light as if to make out the words, all the while calling out the lines from memory. Cuffy, the leader of the praise house on Pine Grove plantation, always made his own hymns, improvised from hymns of the whites, "praying to de Lord Jedus teach um as he in de woods [to] jine
[782] one word 'ginst t'oder."[84] After another hymn and perhaps a spiritual, the leader would ask for a prayer, then

[81] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 20 n.

[82] See also Wm. Henry Trescot, "Address on Gen. Stephen Elliott, delivered in the House of Representatives of South Carolina, Sept. 8, 1866," p. 5. For many years preceding the War, Rev. Stephen Elliott, father of General Elliott, of Beaufort, "had declined the rectorship of a regular congregation, and, having built a church upon his own plantation, preached regularly and most efficiently to the slaves of the neighborhood."

[83] Pierce, "Report," *Rebellion Record*, sup., I., 305.

[84] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 27.

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read a long passage from the Bible and after another prayer call upon a member to speak.

Edward L. Pierce attended several praise meetings on St. Helena in 1862 and reported that "their exhortations to personal piety were fervent, and though their language was many times confused, at least to my ear, occasionally an important instruction or a felicitous expression could be recognized. In one case, a preacher of their own, commenting on the text, 'Blessed are the meek,' exhorted his brethren not to be 'stout-minded.'"[55]

After another prayer and song the "shout" began.[56] Although the prayer meeting invariably preceded the shout, the members considered the shout a part of their worship, explaining that "it exercise de frame."[57] Pushing the benches back to the wall and perhaps putting another piece of lightwood on the fire in the hearth and on the one which burned red before the door, the worshipers began the recreation which for the church members took the place of the informal dance.

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"Old and young, men and women, sprucely-dressed young men, grotesquely half-clad field hands—the women generally with gay handkerchiefs twisted about their heads and with short skirts—boys with tattered shirts and men's trousers, young girls barefooted," wrote Miss Harriet Ware who attended many a shout on St. Helena in the

[55] Pierce, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

[56] Mr. William Elliott, of Columbia, S. C., a relative of the William Elliott frequently quoted in these pages, states that "the 'shout' is the object of the meeting to which the rest is the introduction." Mr. Elliott speaks from an intimate knowledge of sea-island customs. The shouts, however, which the writer attended on St. Helena Island in 1928 were invariably commenced after the praise meeting had been dismissed.

[57] *Letters from Port Royal*, p. 27.

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567 early days of the Civil War, "all stand up in the middle
796 of the floor, and when the 'sperichil' is struck up, begin
535 first walking and by-and-by shuffling around, one after the other, in a ring. The foot is hardly taken from the floor, and the progression is mainly due to a jerking, hitching motion, which agitates the entire shouter, and soon brings out streams of perspiration. Sometimes they dance
567 silently, sometimes as they shuffle they sing the chorus of
796 the spiritual, and sometimes the song itself is also sung
535 by the dancers. But more frequently a band, composed of some of the best singers and tired shouters, stand [*sic*]
533 at the side of the room to 'base' the others, singing the body of the song and clapping their hands together or on their knees. Song and dance are alike extremely energetic, and often, when the shout lasts into the middle of the night, the monotonous thud, thud of the feet prevents sleep within half a mile of the praise-house."[88]

567 Miss Towne thought the shout to be "certainly the re-
796 mains of some old idol worship." "I never saw anything so savage," she said. "They call it a religious ceremony, but it seems more like a regular frolic to me."[89] The
(535) shout was, indeed, a modification of the Negro's regular dance. After a Negro was converted he no longer at-
567 tended dances in the cabins where "de sinners cross um
797 feet," for the Methodist and Baptist preachers and mis-
535 sionaries taught the slaves that dancing was evil. He went instead to the praise house where the same dance, recently
177 in vogue today as the "Charleston," was performed, with-

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 27n; also in *Nation*, May 30, 1867. For other descriptions of shouts on St. Helena Island see *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne*, pp. 20, 21, 22, 23.

[89] *Letters and Diary*, p. 20.

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curtseys, and the men touched their hats in a soldier's salute, or swept them quickly from their heads.

The Reverend Richard Fuller created a sensation when he arrived. Stares brightened and eyes grew moist. Amid shouts of "Bress de Lo'd, Bres de Lo'd!" "Hebenly Massa!" "Gra-a-ate King!" he mounted to the platform. When all were seated a quaint old man, clad in cotton checks, bowed from many years of cotton hoeing, stepped out on the platform and, leaning on his cane, gently swaying his body as if to keep time, struck up in a shrill, cracked voice the tune: 793 796 175 (533) (539)

> "Ma-a-assa Fullah a sittin' on de tree ob life
> For to yeddy when Jordan roll,
> Roll, Jordan; roll, Jordan,
> Roll, Jordan, roll."

And then a plain, middle-aged black preacher came forward and commenced a prayer, which he pursued at great length with frequent interruptions from the congregation of "Amen," "Glory," and "Lo'd, do!" They had already been to their praise-house meetings twice during the week and some of them earlier that morning, but they were none the less eager for this Sunday-noon meeting when fellow freedmen from all over the Island gathered for worship and recreation.[2] (782)

A few former planters, like the Reverend Richard Fuller, had returned to Beaufort to try to take up life again in the little town now overrun with freedmen, Fed- 175

[2] The foregoing description is based on Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour*; "The South As It Is," *Nation*, Dec. 1865, pp. 746-747; J. W. Alvord, *Letters from the South*, pp. 8-10; Charles Nordoff, *The Freedmen of South Carolina*; S. G. W. Benjamin, "The Sea Islands," *Harper's Monthly*, LVII, 839-861.